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MISS VERY'S STORY Page 101

WE FOUR GIRLS

A SUMMER STORY FOR GIRLS

BY

MARY G. DARLING
AUTHOR OF "BATTLES AT HOME," "IN THE WORLD," ETC.

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS
1899

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WE FOUR GIRLS.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

To My Girls

WITH HAPPY MEMORIES OF SCHOOL DAYS

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK

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WE FOUR GIRLS.

CHAPTER I.

HAVENSHOLME *VERSUS* NEWPORT.

"In May! Why, that is beginning the Newport season early! Then you will take Marjorie away from school before the end of the term, I suppose?"

"It would be necessary, certainly, if Marjorie should go with me."

"Perhaps you have other plans for her summer?"

Marjorie looked very eagerly at her mother in expectation of the answer, but Mrs. Hammond did not immediately reply.

The two ladies were sitting side by side on one of the long sofas in Papanti's hall, one April afternoon near the close of the term, when spring days are growing long and lovely, and even youthful dancers are

beginning to find the sound of the violin less pleasant than the notes of robins and bluebirds.

The german was just about to begin; chairs, tied in couples, were pushed about on the polished floor, and eager boys were darting about in search of their partners, intent on being near the head. Marjorie, whose partner had been told to "lead," was, in consequence of the secured position, less involved in the general bustle than her companions, and she heartily wished that Sidney Blair would have waited a moment longer, till her mother should have replied to Mrs. May's question, before coming for her. But there he was with his proffered arm, and eager —

"Come, Miss Hammond! Aren't we in luck to be first? Three rows deep halfway round the hall!" And off went Marjorie somewhat regretfully.

Mrs. Hammond followed her tall daughter, with eyes half grave, half smiling.

"Yes, I have other plans for Marjorie, though she does not yet know them. But, as I hope you may consent to share them

in Effie's behalf, I will tell you before I tell her."

"My dear Mrs. Hammond, you may be sure of my consent to anything you have planned — Effie would be happy anywhere with Marjorie."

"Effie is a great favorite of Marjorie's," said Mrs. Hammond, "and I particularly wish her to have for her companions the friends she loves best. She has never been away from home without me before, and this summer she is to go."

"What, to boarding-school?"

"Oh, no! I have too much sympathy for homesick girlhood ever to try that. Even though Marjorie might not be one of the homesick girls, I do not approve of moral training in the mass. I shall send her to a dear girl-friend of mine in Havensholme, less for study than for the sake of the influence under which she will be brought, and, most of all, with the idea of throwing her on her own resources."

"My dear Mrs. Hammond! Marjorie is already so self-reliant for her age."

"Is she?" said Marjorie's mother, smiling.

"Really, I don't know; she has never yet been obliged to depend upon herself."

"But she is so independent. My Effie, two years younger, is a mere baby beside her, and all the girls follow her lead."

"Yes, she is self-confident, I allow; that is just why I wish to throw her for a while on her own resources. But let me tell you more of my plan, and then you will be able to decide more fairly about Effie."

And then followed details of the scheme, which, as Marjorie did not know them, it is hardly fair that we should hear.

"I am sure that would be satisfactory in every way," said Mrs. May, "and Miss Forrester would place us all in her debt. Then you do not make this plan for Marjorie because you disapprove of Newport life for a girl of her age?"

"Fourteen is rather young for that objection, though I confess I should choose a healthier atmosphere than even *reflected* Newport. No, my real reason is that I wish Marjorie to *find herself out*, — a hard thing for her to do at home with the petting she receives from her uncle and Rosamond."

"I wonder you should go there yourself," said Mrs. May, "it is such a sacrifice for you two to be parted."

"I go because, as you know, Rosamond is to be married this summer, and my sister is too much of an invalid to be left alone. Our summers, with the double household, have been delightful during Marjorie's childhood, but whether they will continue to be so after this year, I cannot tell. Yes, it is certainly a sacrifice for us to be parted, and yet that, too, is part of my plan. But if Effie goes, you will share the sacrifice."

"I have a nursery full," said Mrs. May, smiling, "and you have only Marjorie. Then Effie is somewhat of a spoiled child, as we all tell her, and it will do her good to rough it a little. I only hope for her sake that Miss Forrester may not be too indulgent. But you say nothing of the other girls, Mrs. Hammond. I hope you don't mean to leave out poor Kate? It would break her heart not to share Marjorie's fortunes."

"Kate shall certainly go if Mrs. Cleveland can be brought to consent. The home

atmosphere is not very congenial for a girl of Kate's decided tastes, I fancy. But look at the four girls who are dancing now. They make up my party."

Mrs. May followed the four couples with her eyes; the tall, dark-haired Marjorie, with her erect carriage and small head set proudly on her shoulders; her own little pink-and-white Effie, with flowing golden locks; a merry, good-natured-looking girl with dancing brown eyes, and tawny mane rippling rebelliously out of the braid in which it was plaited; and, lastly, a slender, gray-eyed, fair-skinned little damsel, with smooth brown hair and a look of shy, beaming content on her placid face, as she waltzed past them.

"Not Rachel?"

"And why not Rachel? I particularly wish her to go on Marjorie's account."

"Oh, for no especial reason," Mrs. May replied, somewhat constrainedly. "I wondered whether her mother could spare her, I suppose. She is so delicate, and so dependent on Rachel."

"I have asked it as a favor to myself,"

said Mrs. Hammond. "The child needs a holiday, and, if she goes, Mrs. Deane will be with her sisters in the country."

"Only two more times," said Kate Cleveland, regretfully, as they put on their wraps standing sociably in little knots and groups about the crowded dressing-room. "And then nothing more to look forward to! I hate spring school days, — oh, Marjorie! how I wish I were you, going off to Newport, and getting rid of horrid examinations!"

Marjorie said nothing, but gave a quick glance at her mother.

"You do not mean to take me to Newport this summer, mamma," she said abruptly, when they were at last seated together in their own pretty, cosey little parlor.

"No, Marjorie, not for the summer, only for a flying visit when Rosamond's wedding comes off."

The color flushed brightly into the girl's cheeks, for, in spite of her previous suspicions, the certainty was a surprise; but she spoke very quietly, fixing her clear brown eyes on her mother's face.

"I am very sorry, mamma. What do you mean to have me do?"

"I am going to send you to a dear friend of mine, Miss Grace Forrester, in Havensholme."

"I have never heard of her," said Marjorie, coldly.

"Oh, yes, and you have seen her too, though not since you were quite a little girl. She does not often leave her home for visits now that her father is dead, for her mother would be alone. You have surely heard me say that Dr. Forrester was dear grandmamma's doctor?"

"Yes," said Marjorie, in a softened tone.

"And this daughter was a favorite of mine when we used to spend our summers in Havensholme."

"Is she old?"

"Old?" echoed Mrs. Hammond, laughing. "Do you call me old, then?"

"No, of course not," said Marjorie, smiling in spite of herself, "not old for *anybody's mother*. I mean is she old for a young lady?"

"Really I had forgotten what 'old'

meant when I was fourteen. I think Grace Forrester may possibly be twenty-four — very many years younger than I, you see."

"I am sure I shan't like her," said Marjorie, decisively, but to this Mrs. Hammond made no reply.

"I have not told you that I hope Effie, Kate, and Rachel may go with you."

"No!" cried Marjorie, her cloudy face brightening. "That is *something*, at any rate. And are we to study with Miss Forrester?"

"You do not go for that purpose, but you will study, no doubt. Havensholme is a place that you will all enjoy, and Miss Forrester, I hope and believe, you will all love. She is very fond of girls, and she writes me that my summer plan for you will be all pleasure to her."

"I shall never care for any one as I do for Rosamond!" cried Marjorie, with a spice of defiance in her tone.

"Why, my child? Because she makes a pet and plaything of you?"

"Not for that reason, no," said Marjorie,

proudly, "but because she is so beautiful and sweet; there is nobody like her. Mamma, you send me away because you think they spoil me at aunty's."

"And partly perhaps because I, too, spoil you, my Marjorie! Dear, don't you know that it is best for us all to be thrown on ourselves for a little? We cannot be pets and playthings forever; we must rub against the rest of the world, — the people who have no particular reason for being indulgent to us, — rub off our own sharp corners, and learn to see ourselves with other people's eyes. When the time comes for stepping out into the world, none of us can expect to find life all rose-leaves."

"But I never thought you would *send* me away from you!" cried Marjorie, with a choke in her voice.

Just at that moment a ringing, boyish voice at the door made them both turn.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUNNY SIDE.

"WHY, Cliff!" cried Marjorie, springing to her feet in joyous welcome, at sight of the handsome, dark-eyed, bright-faced boy standing on the threshold. "Where did you drop from?"

The two, as they stood side by side, looked enough alike to be brother and sister; the same clear, dark complexion, bright brown eyes, and proudly set head, though Clifford's eyes twinkled with fun, while Marjorie's looked at you gravely and searchingly, and only occasionally softened into a smile, the sweeter for its rarity.

"Drop from?" he repeated, greeting his aunt with a hearty kiss, "why, it is the beginning of the Easter holidays, to be sure, and I have come here to spend a few days with one of the fellows, instead of going home, since they are all on the wing

there for Newport. I tell you what, Marjorie, you won't get much good out of Rosamond this summer until after the wedding — she's all bristling with pins and new gowns!"

"I shan't get any good out of her in any way," said Marjorie, mournfully. "I'm not going to Newport, Cliff."

"What! not for the wedding?"

"Oh, yes, for that, I believe, but not for the summer. I'm going off alone, — with some of the girls, at least, — to stay at Havensholme, with mamma's friend, Miss Forrester."

Marjorie's tone was dolorous in the extreme, but Cliff interrupted her with a burst of exultation.

"At Havensholme? What a jolly notion! Why, Marjorie, I'm close by there. Don't you know that Exton is only two miles off?"

"No; is it?"

"Certainly it is, and Havensholme is just the nicest old place. Big houses built by the swells in the Revolutionary times, great trees, and the sea within easy reach.

What horseback rides we'll have down those shady streets, and along the beach!"

"Horseback rides?"

"Of course. There's a first-rate stable there where we fellows go. I could get you a capital saddle-horse and bring him over. What a gay time we'll have!"

"Wait till Miss Forrester hears the plan," said Mrs. Hammond, laughing, while Marjorie looked somewhat bewildered at the new aspect which the future had assumed under Cliff's showing. "Possibly she may not consent so readily as you seem to think."

"Oh, there's a schoolma'am to ask, is there?" said Cliff, his face falling. "I forgot that. But Marjorie can take a leaf out of our book; when we're afraid of not being allowed, we don't ask. You didn't say you were going to school."

"Miss Forrester isn't a schoolma'am," said Marjorie. "She is a friend of mamma's and she is going to take care of us girls this summer. She says she likes girls and will enjoy having us there."

"No wonder! I should think she might,

indeed. But what girls are going with you?"

"Effie May, for one."

"I know," nodded Clifford, "that pretty little doll-faced thing, with the yellow hair. Any one else?"

"Kate Cleveland, I hope."

"What, that jolly girl, who has such a dragon of a stepmother? Yes, I remember her at your birthday party. She looks as if she would be on hand if there were any fun going. Who else?"

"Rachel Deane."

"She looks rather a 'sober-sides' for you, Marjorie. I suspect you've chosen her for your bosom friend just because you can twist her round your finger. Confess now!"

"That's just what I can't do!" cried Marjorie, with some warmth. "And that's why I like her so much!"

Clifford threw back his head with an amused laugh. "There's a reason for you — what Rosamond would call one of 'Queenie's contrarieties!' It must be for the rarity of it, then, for there are very few people whom you don't manage to get round. I

predict that Miss Forrester will be one of the number."

Mrs. Hammond shook her head, with a quiet little smile.

"Won't she, then? Poor Miss Forrester! For, in that case, I foresee a struggle for supremacy, and I'll back you, Marjorie! Well, at all events, I'm in luck to have you so near, and I'm disposed to see the bright side of the Havensholme plan, Newport notwithstanding!"

"Are there any plans to which you *don't* see the bright side, Clifford?" said Mrs. Hammond, with a caressing pat on the boy's shoulder.

"Indeed, yes, Aunt Anna! This capital notion of yours for Marjorie comes just in time to brighten what I had thought was a very dark lookout for me. In consequence of mathematical weaknesses, not under my control, I shall be heavily conditioned in my 'first half' examinations in June. Then I shall have to stay in Exton a good part of the summer and coach up with a tutor. That is anything but a bright lookout, but, with Marjorie and her crowd within a couple

of miles, things will wear a very much sunnier aspect, don't you see?"

"You put in a good deal of the sunshine, yourself, Clifford," said Mrs. Hammond, affectionately, while Marjorie's face, losing its moody expression, began to wear a softer and sweeter aspect, "being somewhat of a domestic sunbeam in your own person."

"Thank you, Aunt Anna," he rejoined, with a laugh. "I can tell you who *won't* be very sunbeamy when he hears that you've sent his pet to Coventry, and that is my father. He has been laying in so many presents for her that Rosamond says she believes he has made a mistake, and thinks the wedding is to be Marjorie's, not hers."

So the evening passed gayly in merry boy-and-girl chat, to which Mrs. Hammond's presence was no restraint, and when Clifford departed he left some of his sunshine behind him.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE GIRLS GOT THERE.

A BRIGHT May morning found the four girls in the drawing-room car of the train to Havensholme, under the safe conduct of Susan, Marjorie's nurse in old days and guardian for all times. Every scruple and drawback contingent on the starting of the four had been happily overcome. Rachel's ailing mother was already with her sisters in the country, happy in the thought of her devoted little nurse's holiday, and not insensible to the charm of Mrs. Hammond's sweet words when the request for Rachel's joining the party had been made.

"I ask it as a personal favor," Marjorie's mother had said. "Of all my daughter's friends, Rachel is the one for whom she has the most respect, — a very important element in girl-friendships. 'Rachel,' she says, 'never flatters, never allows herself to be

led contrary to her idea of duty, or to be overpersuaded when she is wavering.' Marjorie is honest enough to appreciate such qualities in a friend, and her mother knows how to be grateful to the friend who possesses such a good influence."

So Rachel was in the train, smiling and serene, and without the little line of care which sometimes furrowed her smooth forehead. Kate Cleveland, too, had overcome the maternal objections, though not, if her own words were to be accepted, without a struggle.

"I'm sure I never thought last week that I should be starting with you to-day, girls!" she exclaimed, as she settled herself, beaming with smiles, on the seat beside Marjorie. "Mother declared 'she couldn't have me away for so long, when the children were all as cross as little bears after getting over the measles — I couldn't leave school in April, even if Miss Forrester were the very paragon of teachers — I should come home without a whole dress or a whole pair of stockings' — oh, there were a dozen reasons why I couldn't go! What became of them

all, I don't know. I think your mother must be a benevolent fairy, or perhaps it was a reward because I didn't get in a worry about it. I just took it easily, and tried to believe it would all come out right at last, and so it has, you see, dear, darling Marjorie!"

Marjorie took Kate's demonstrative outburst of affection, with its accompanying embrace, in very good part, in spite of its publicity. It was impossible to be anything but amiable this lovely May morning, with the birds singing so gayly under the bright blue sky, and all nature so fresh and smiling, even on the borders of the railroad track. Marjorie put away the recollection of the parting with her mother, the playfully scolding note from Rosamond, and the foregone delights of Newport, postponed the prejudice arising in her contrary little mind against Miss Forrester, and resigned herself to the enjoyment of the moment. Her bright brown eyes danced like the mountain brooks, to which Rosamond sometimes compared them, and her clear voice and rippling laugh were heard

as often as Kate Cleveland's own. As to little Effie, life was generally a holiday to her, and this spring morning was no exception.

"I wish you would tell us," said Kate, "what mysterious plans you and your cousin Clifford have been getting up for the summer. I'm ready for any fun, but I like to know what it is to be beforehand."

"Our plans are vague," said Marjorie. "They depend largely on what Miss Forrester proves to be. If she should turn out to be a tyrant, Clifford means to come to the rescue of us forlorn damsels."

"Tyrant?" cried Effie, with a distressed expression. "Why, Marjorie, I thought your mother said she was lovely."

"Mamma never told me a thing about her," replied Marjorie, "except that she was a friend of hers. She wanted me to 'form my own idea of her,' she said. I've formed it already, girls. She is very tall, thin, and angular, — Graces always are, — with a pair of blue glasses, a Roman nose, and sandy hair done up in a little pug."

"I think," said Rachel, "that she is

short and stout, with rosy cheeks, a big dimple in her chin, and curly dark hair."

"A slight contrast to Marjorie's siren!" laughed Kate. "I haven't an idea how she looks, but I have a strong presentiment that she will turn out to be jolly, so if Clifford Dexter's 'fun' depends on her being horrid, we sha'n't have much of it."

Effie said nothing, but, as a vision of the portrait so forcibly sketched by Marjorie rose before her imagination, the corners of her mouth began to wear a very pensive droop, and the blue eyes, fixed on the car window, to take such a dewy aspect, that Marjorie became alarmed, and forthwith exerted all her powers to comfort the school pet, and charm away, if possible, the demon of homesickness. She succeeded so well that none of the four were thinking in the least of the journey's end, when Susan began to gather up the scattered baskets and shawl-straps.

"The next station is Havensholme, Miss Marjorie."

And Marjorie grew suddenly grave, her heart seeming to give a leap into her

throat. Accustomed at all times to be looked upon as a leader by the other girls, she felt a not unnatural sense of responsibility about this Havensholme scheme, and so much depended on what Miss Forrester might prove to be.

It was, accordingly, a somewhat grave young face that met Grace Forrester's eyes, as she sat in her little pony carriage drawn close up to the platform, looking out eagerly for her charges. Marjorie was, from her height, the conspicuous figure in the group; a tall, slight, girlish form, in close-fitting, dark blue suit, her glossy dark hair brushed smoothly away from her face, and hanging in a long braid on her shoulders. She held the blue-eyed, blooming little Effie by one hand, and the other rested on the arm of Rachel Deane, whose usually pale cheeks were flushed with the little excitement and suspense. Over her shoulder looked Kate's round, rosy face, her eyes twinkling with suppressed merriment, despite the anxiety of the moment. Susan, laden with shawls and travelling-bags, brought up the rear.

"Here you all are!" cried Grace, drop-

MISS FORRESTER MEETS THE GIRLS AT THE STATION Page 22

ping the reins to hold out both hands in a hearty greeting to the four — the little carriage was so low that she did not need to rise. "And you are Marjorie Hammond, I am sure, for you look so much like your mother, only taller and more slender. Susan I remember from old times, but you must introduce me to the others, for, though I know all their names, I cannot guess which is which."

Grace's voice was as warm and hearty as the pressure of her hand, and both brought a sense of homelikeness to the girlish hearts, though Marjorie's gravity did not relax.

"If you please, Miss Forrester," Susan said, in her precise tones, "I was to give the young ladies into your care, and go back in the next train."

"No, drive home with us, Susan," Grace said kindly. "Mehitable is depending on seeing you again; and after dinner I will send you to the depot in time for a later train."

Marjorie was secretly prepossessed by this cordial tone to her old nurse: it seemed to

bring up to her recollection the summers her mother had spent in the town, when Dr. Forrester had taken care of her grandmother, and the faithful Susan had walked about the shady streets in attendance on her own baby steps. She stood regarding Miss Forrester with a half-smile in her dark eyes.

"I can take one of you with me," said Grace. "It shall be Marjorie, I think, as I have so many questions to ask her; and another might ride in the 'tiger's' seat. There is a carryall here for the other two girls and Susan, and a cart for the trunks."

Effie squeezed Marjorie's hand at the mention of the seat in the pony carriage, so that was assigned to her, and Kate and Rachel walked off to the carryall, while Marjorie took the vacant place beside Grace, and the little carriage rolled lightly on its way.

Then Marjorie took a more leisurely survey of Miss Forrester, certainly *not* to find her own fancy portrait verified. She had a full, finely moulded figure, with broad

shoulders, and a somewhat massive white throat. Her head was nobly formed, and her profile clearly cut and full of character. There was little positive beauty of feature or bloom of complexion in the face, which might seem, at the first glance, to lack softness. But the clear blue-gray eyes met yours with a look of absolute truthfulness and most winning cordiality, and when she smiled the grave lines of her face relaxed into a sunny sweetness. Her teeth were even and dazzlingly white, and the firm round chin was cleft by a deep dimple.

"Rachel was right there, at least," said Marjorie to herself. "She is rather different from what I imagined her, certainly. How strong she looks, and how well she carries herself! I wonder if I shall ever have such shoulders and such a throat as that!"

Marjorie straightened herself involuntarily, glancing at Effie in the little perch behind. The two girls exchanged a smile which Grace did not notice. She was talking pleasantly about the different landmarks which they passed, and her tone was as genial as her smile.

"That is the road to Exton, a place swarming with schoolboys."

"Yes, I know," exclaimed Marjorie, leaning forward to look at the signpost, as if it were an old acquaintance. "I have a cousin at Phelps Academy."

"Then we must invite him over to see you," said Grace. "I know a good many of the schoolboys. They often walk over to this pond we are passing for boating, or skating in winter."

"You skate, of course, Miss Forrester?"

"A great deal in the old times," said Grace, with a half-smile. "See, Marjorie! that is the very house where your mother spent her summers when you were a wee toddling baby."

Again Marjorie looked out eagerly at the great, square, old-fashioned mansion, with its high green banks and the two giant elms in front.

"I almost think I remember that!" she said. "I used to walk up and down that shady path with Susan, and pick up horse-chestnuts, while mamma sat on that garden bench. I suppose I was about three years old."

"And I used to drive over with my father," said Grace, "and think that no one ever had such a sweet sad face as Mrs. Hammond. Ah! you can't remember your father, little Marjorie!"

The girl shook her head. "He died just after I was born. He was a soldier," she added proudly, "and was wounded in the war. Mamma has told me so much about him that I can almost believe I remember him. She often had a photograph of him in her hand as she sat there under the trees. It had a velvet frame, and I used to kiss it and call it '*my dear little velvet papa.*' Ah, yes, I surely remember that house, and this place looks to me like the streets and houses one sees in dreams."

She looked from side to side of the wide street, with its grass-bordered paths, and rows of stately elms, an eager, pleased recognition in her eyes. The houses, standing far back in old-fashioned gardens, had a hospitable, friendly air, the house-doors open and affording a peep into wide, home-like halls. Effie, sitting in the "tiger's"

seat, opened wide eyes of amazement at Marjorie's unusual lack of reserve, and Miss Forrester glanced at the girl with one of her sunny smiles.

For some time they had been driving up a hilly road, and now they turned into the gateway of just such a house as those they had passed, a square, roomy, white mansion, standing high up on the hillside, with a *Pyrus Japonica* hedge, just now in the first flush of its crimson bloom, horse-chestnut trees bursting into bright green leafage, a sunny veranda in front, and the doctor's disused offices stretching out at the side in a long low-roofed wing.

"That shall be our study and sitting-room," said Grace. "Look, Effie, I think you can just catch a glimpse of the sea from your high perch. Now, Marjorie, jump out first, and there is my mother waiting for you at the top of the steps."

Marjorie gave a glance at the snowy-haired, kindly faced figure on the veranda, then both girls turned, with an instinctive drawing as to an old friend, to wait for Grace. She had thrown the reins to a

man who had come from the stable, and was stooping down to take up something from the floor of the carriage. Effie involuntarily held out her hand.

"Take my arm, dear," said Grace, gently, "I must have my hands just now."

She swung herself out of the low carriage on to the broad flagstone at the foot of the steps, and then the two girls exchanged a frightened, shocked glance. Miss Forrester had stooped to pick up a pair of crutches: the firm, strong, erect figure was that of a woman who, without their aid, would have been a helpless cripple!

Effie's lip trembled, but she hesitated a moment only, laying her hand on Grace's arm, and contriving, as she did so, to touch her shoulder with her own cheek in a pretty little caressing fashion peculiar to Effie. But Marjorie turned away. The shock had given her a sort of physical repulsion, a feeling sometimes awakened in young, healthy natures by the sight of suffering, and increased in this instance by the admiration which she had felt for Grace's strong, beautiful figure. She felt half

angry, too, that her mother should not have told her.

"I ought to have known it — she should have told me!" and she compressed her lips with an unreasoning protest against the appeal to her sympathies which she fancied her mother's silence had covered. Poor Marjorie! she had much to learn as yet.

It was impossible to tell whether Miss Forrester had noticed the different effect produced on the two girls by the discovery of her lameness. There was nothing of self-consciousness about her at any time, and she mounted the steps so easily and lightly that neither of them noticed how she did it. Rachel and Kate, arriving at the moment, effectually diverted all special observation from Grace herself. Yet Marjorie, standing a little apart from the others, surprised a quick furtive glance from Kate's bright eyes and a sensitive flush on Rachel's cheek, which showed her that Susan had prepared them.

"I should have been told as well as they!" she said to herself, bitterly.

"It was taking an unfair advantage of me."

"Grace, dear," said Mrs. Forrester, in her comfortable, motherly tones, "had you not better show the girls the way to their rooms?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONVENT CELLS.

THE house was as pleasantly old-fashioned as its exterior promised, a wide, low-stepped staircase, with handsomely carved balustrade, leading from the great hall to the chambers above. From the first landing a narrow passage turned off into the wing containing the doctor's offices, and into this Miss Forrester led the girls.

"Your bedrooms are all here together," she said, opening the first door, "and, as this passage leads by a flight of steps at the other end into my room, we shall be very cosey, you see."

"Oh, what odd little rooms!" cried Kate, darting into the first, and through the connecting door into the second, while Effie did the same on the other side of the passage.

"Like cells in a monastery," said Rachel, with a pleased glance at the snowy little beds, flowered cretonne curtains, and deep-cushioned window-seats, "only much prettier."

"My father built them for resident patients," said Grace, "patients from a distance who needed sea air, and whom he wished to have under his own eye."

Meantime Marjorie had made a new discovery.

"See, girls!" she exclaimed, "each of the cells has a name! This is '*Humility*,' and that '*Courage*,' and on the other side '*Patience*,' and '*Generosity*.' Was that part of the prescription, Miss Forrester?"

"No," said Grace, smiling, "that was an idea of a fanciful friend of mine, and dates much later than the hospital. She painted the names over the doors, and advised me to put my guests where they severally belonged. You shall choose your own cells, however."

"Then put me in '*Patience*,'" cried Kate, "for I'm sure I need it!"

"I'll go into '*Generosity*,'" said Effie, with a half-laughing blush. "They say at home that I always want the best of everything."

"Put Marjorie into '*Humility*'!" exclaimed Kate, clapping her hands. "Really and truly, Miss Forrester, that is the only thing she needs — isn't it, girls?"

"I don't like humility," said Marjorie, with a grimace. "Indeed, I'd rather not have it."

"You must in this instance, however," said Rachel, giving her a little push through the open doorway, "for I'm sure the other room, '*Courage*,' is exactly suited to my case."

As the little rooms were alike in point of furnishing, the choice seemed confined to the names, and Rachel and Marjorie were speedily established on one side of the passage, Kate and Effie on the other.

"Come to my room when you have taken off your hats and are comfortably settled," said Grace, as she turned down the passage.

"Oh, girls!" cried Kate, the indiscreet,

as Miss Forrester disappeared, "did you know before that she was lame?"

Marjorie turned away with a laconic "No," and the tears rose quickly in Effie's blue eyes.

"Too bad, isn't it?" Kate went on, in the same tone. "She doesn't seem at all the kind of person to *be* lame."

"Hush, Kate!" warned Rachel, laying a hand on her shoulder, but too late. Mehitable, the gaunt old family servant, entering the passage in advance of the man who brought up the trunks, had heard, and answered.

"No more she ain't," she said grimly. "You don't s'pose she was born so, do yer? Three years ago there warn't the girl in Havensholme could outwalk or outrun her either." Mehitable's face kept its wooden expression as she spoke, but her voice quavered oddly.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said Kate, confusedly, and, as the man disappeared in Mehitable's train, she sat for a moment quite crimson, her hands clasped over her offending lips.

"How could it have happened?" she gasped breathlessly.

"That isn't our concern," said Marjorie, dryly. "Come, Ray, if you're ready, let us go and see Miss Forrester's room."

Kate and Effie followed rather meekly, for Marjorie was evidently in one of her moods of repression, and, for the most part, she had a subordinate following.

Grace's room seemed to the four girls all that was homelike and delightful. It was the corner room on the side of the house looking toward the sea, and had a little oriel window built out into the very midst of the old horse-chestnut trees. Her pet canary hung in the sunniest window, and a whole nursery of plants filled up a little anteroom, while every available resting-place was covered with photographs, bric-a-brac, and the thousand and one little knicknacks that give to a room the air of being *lived in*. The furniture was, for the most part, old-fashioned and heavy, but a carved cabinet in one corner, and a huge Indian fan in another, caught the eye from their unlikeness to their surroundings.

"How many Indian things you have!" said Marjorie, looking at the bronze vases, the delicate little ivory carvings, tiny grotesque Buddhas, and lacquered boxes scattered about the room.

"Yes, and this is a Japanese cabinet," said Grace; "it is full of my treasures, and we will look them over together some day."

"Some rainy day," crid Effie, gleefully, "and you shall tell us their history! Did your father go to India when he was a young man, Miss Forrester? That is the way people get their curiosities."

"Not my father, but the father of one of my friends, and almost all these things came to me through him."

Beside the bed hung a small colored photograph of a young man, scarcely more than a boy, fair-haired and blue-eyed, but not with the look of calmness and placidity that we are apt to associate with that complexion. The wavy fair hair had such a decided turn of its own, and the blue eyes such a keen vivacious sparkle, that the little picture attracted the notice of Rachel, who happened to be standing near it.

"What a bright face!" she remarked. "I should think it must be a perfect likeness."

"It was," said Grace; "that is the friend of whom I spoke just now."

There was a little pause, for the four girls noted the *was* in Grace's reply, and, with girlish sensitiveness, felt abashed at having unwittingly chanced upon a subject made sacred, perhaps, by death. The pause was broken by a summons to dinner, and Mrs. Forrester's gentle hospitality, with Grace's cheerful talk, soon put the young guests at their ease again.

That night, as Marjorie was lying awake in her pretty little room, wakeful, not from homesickness, but rather from the newness of her position, a sound of sobbing reached her from the opposite room, "*Generosity*," which little Effie had appropriated. She sat up in her bed to listen. Yes, Effie was certainly crying, and in the half-unconscious, distressful way of one who has wakened from sleep in tears. As Effie's nearest neighbor, Kate, was a noted sleeper, whom it would have taken more than a fit of sob-

bing in the next room to arouse, Marjorie felt that it devolved upon her to soothe and comfort Effie. She had already sprung from her bed and stolen, barefoot, to the open door, when she saw that she had been forestalled. Miss Forrester, in a soft flowing wrapper, had come quickly down the passage, and was already seated on the side of Effie's bed.

"Why, my dear little girl!" Marjorie heard her say, "what is the matter? Are you so very homesick?"

"Oh, no — oh, no!" Effie sobbed. "But I dreamed — I dreamed — oh, Miss Forrester, I dreamed that some dreadful accident had happened, and you were lame!"

"Well, so I am," said Grace, putting her arm around the child, who was still, evidently, but half awake, "but not because anything dreadful has happened, and not, surely, that you should dream of it, or vex your dear little heart with crying over it. Why, my child! are all those tears for me?"

"Yes," sobbed Effie, now fairly awake, and perhaps even more mortified by the

reality than distressed by the dream, "I was dreaming, but oh! dear Miss Forrester, I am so — so sorry! It must be so hard to bear!"

"So it was, at first," said Grace, cheerily, "but that is over long ago. So forget all about it, darling child, and never let the thought of me trouble your dreams again."

She kissed Effie's cheek as she spoke, and, putting her arm round the little figure, which clung to her so lovingly, lay down beside her till she should be again asleep. Marjorie stole back to her own bed, feeling a sort of huskiness in her throat, which she attributed to the draughts in the passage.

CHAPTER V.

CHOOSING A PROFESSION.

CLIFFORD was not long in making his appearance at the Forresters'. He came in upon the party one afternoon when they were all gathered in the doctor's office, now converted by Grace into a charming study and sitting-room for her charges. The doctor's library, in high black-walnut bookcases, still filled two sides of the room; two glass cases of stuffed birds bore witness to one of the recreations of his leisure hours, and from the top of one of the bookcases looked down a skull, which, Effie said, gave her "a chilly sensation in her backbone." But, with this exception, the room was as cheery and sunny a gathering-place as could well be imagined. It was a long room, giving a wide scope for windows, into which peeped the budding lilacs, and, later, old-fashioned pink roses; the great table ac-

commodated all four girls with their books, while Kate's easel found a resting-place near the deep chair appropriated to Miss Forrester.

She was not long in finding out the favorite pursuits of each girl, and helping them on. Marjorie and Rachel had brought a carefully prepared schedule of the school lessons to the end of the term, and studied as zealously as if they, too, were to bear their share in the examinations. Both were excellent scholars, and so full of ardor that it was a pleasure to teach them. Marjorie's mind was quick and brilliant, seeming to dart at things by intuition, and a new fact would make her cheeks burn and her eyes glow. Rachel almost made up by her clear-headedness for her friend's quickness of insight, and both seemed spurred on by an ambition which had nothing unhealthy in it, but, as Grace suspected, some secret motive, not yet revealed to her.

Kate's interests lay in a different direction. School lessons, she confessed, were great drudgery to her, and though she had conscientiously chosen, for her summer

study, the two least congenial branches, she brought out her books with a penitential air, quite in contrast to the eager ardor of the other two. But when she shyly produced her sketch-book, easel, and water-colors, Grace saw at once where her heart lay, and that there was one thing in which the careless, hoydenish, fun-loving Kate was thoroughly in earnest. Her talent was considerable, and she had been well taught; but she was prone to fits of the deepest despondency respecting her own powers. "For O Miss Forrester!" she exclaimed, "I have set my heart on being an artist, really and truly, you know, as a man chooses his profession. I have made up my mind what mine is to be — why shouldn't girls as well as boys?"

"They should, I think," Grace replied, "and when they find their vocation as early as you have yours, they are all the happier for it."

"But suppose they haven't any vocation?" Effie observed, pathetically. "Now I, for instance. I can't draw like Kate, I can't sing like Marjorie, and I don't love to

study as she and Rachel do. I can't think of anything that I should really like to work at unless, perhaps, learning to cook and making all kinds of cakes and ice-creams and nice things to eat."

"Well, take that for an object, then," said Grace, smiling. "It isn't by any means a contemptible one, Effie, either, for a home daughter, or for the head of a household. If you are really in earnest about it, you shall take regular lessons of Mehitable, and begin at the foundation of cookery by learning to make bread."

Effie had just clapped her hands in delight, and Marjorie and Rachel joined in with a laughing "Let us too!" when Mehitable, opening the study door, ushered in Clifford with a solemn "Mr. Dexter, ma'am, to see the young ladies."

"How jolly you all look here!" Clifford said, standing still for a moment after Marjorie had presented him to Miss Forrester, and looking round the room with his bright smile; "I wish the Exton authorities would follow your example, Miss Forrester! And as to electives, you see I heard a little of

what you were saying when I came in. I wish they'd give us fellows such a refreshing switch off the track now and then!"

"What, do you want to learn cooking, too?" Effie asked.

"Not exactly," said the boy, with a laugh. "In fact, I've always believed that cooking came by nature to men, in illustration of which belief, there is hardly a fellow who doesn't achieve brilliant success with the frying-pan the very first time he camps out. Another proof of the superiority of our sex, Marjorie!"

"Nonsense! That is only because you boys are less particular, Cliff. If Miss Forrester will let us have a picnic some day, we'll soon prove you in the wrong!"

"With all my heart," said Grace, merrily.

Clifford had been walking about the room till he found himself at a convenient vantage-ground from Kate's easel, and now asked if he might look.

"If you care to," Kate replied, dejectedly. "There isn't anything worth your seeing!"

"Indeed, I don't know that," Cliff returned.

"I'm not an authority in water-colors, though I should like to make you believe me one; but I know a pretty thing when I see it, and it strikes me that that bit of winding road with the peep of the beach, and the little waves rolling in, *is* pretty. Who goes sketching with you — any one?"

"Miss Forrester helps me a great deal," said Kate, with a sigh, "with advice and suggestion, I mean. She has so true an eye that she ought to be an artist. But I work alone."

"I wonder if you know one of our Exton fellows — Charley Richards?" said Cliff, looking at Miss Forrester. "He used to beguile half a dozen of us into going with him on his long dusty sketching tramps, out of sheer envy at his delight in 'pretty bits!'"

"Charley Richards?" said Grace. "Oh, yes, he is a great favorite of mine. When he comes home on his vacation — you know he is in college now — I am depending on his help for Kate."

"And I am looking to him to 'coach' me up in mathematics," said Cliff, "for I

shall have to stay about Exton most of the summer. That will give me a reason for walking often to Havensholme, and an excuse for dropping in here by the way, if you will let me, Miss Forrester."

"I hope you will," said Grace, cordially; "it will be a pleasure to me, as well as to Marjorie."

"Oh, I shan't wait till Richards comes, to see Marjorie. We have a great deal laid out in the way of walking and driving—subject to your permission, of course."

"Of course Miss Forrester can't have any objection," said Marjorie, turning her clear eyes, in which was a quicker flash than usual, toward Grace. "What possible harm should there be in my walking with Cliff?"

Grace was silent.

"Why should I not?" Marjorie repeated.

"You should in vacation," said Miss Forrester, glancing with a frank smile at Clifford; "but your cousin knows that Havensholme is 'out of bounds' for Exton boys, and I should not wish one of my wards to act as a decoy bird."

"O Miss Forrester, you're too hard on

us fellows!" said Cliff, good-humoredly, while the cloud settled on Marjorie's brow. "However, I must set out on my home tramp unless I mean to cut recitation. Good-by to you all, and thank you for a pleasant half-hour."

Marjorie followed her cousin to the door.

"There isn't any reason, of course, why we shouldn't walk together, Cliff," she repeated.

"Just as you say," returned Cliff the easy-tempered. "Of course Miss Forrester could have no objection if we *chanced* to meet. You walk a good deal in the afternoons?"

"Yes, every other day with one of the girls. Miss Forrester always takes two of us to drive with her."

"All right. I'll be on the lookout for you. Or what do you say to a secret signal system? Two sticks and a certain number of pebbles on top of the corner stone of the wall where the Exton road turns off shall mean that I will be walking in that neighborhood the next day but one, at the hour indicated by the pebbles. How will that do?"

"Delightful!" cried Marjorie, with the sudden flash of fun in her grave eyes which had been Clifford's incentive to many a prank as far back as their nursery days. "But I don't mean to have anything underhanded about it, Cliff. I shall always tell Miss Forrester that we met you."

"Well, suit yourself. But I don't think your ogre's den is anything very terrible, after all, Marjorie. Miss Forrester is capital, don't you think so?"

"I don't know yet what I do think," his cousin replied, with knitted brows, — the actual truth being that, while she would have been glad to dislike Miss Forrester, Marjorie was continually finding herself on the brink of thawing into voluntary warmth and even affection toward her.

As she slowly retraced her steps to the study, the words that met her ear showed that the conversation, interrupted by Clifford's entrance, had been resumed. This time Rachel was the spokeswoman. "Kate has told you what her profession is to be," she was saying, "and I have mine, too. I mean to be a teacher, Miss Forrester."

"So I suspected," said Grace, with a smile, "and you have some special plan in view, by way of preparation."

"Oh, yes," said Rachel, with a flush of excitement on her quiet face, and the light in her eyes which sometimes made her unexpectedly lovely. "I shall study for the Harvard examinations and be a Radcliffe college girl. That will be such a help by-and-by when I get to be a teacher, for I am not only to choose my profession like Kate, I must make money by it, and support my mother and myself."

"And what is Marjorie to do?" said Grace, as the girl entered.

"She is studying with me," said Rachel, slipping her arm lovingly into her friend's, and drawing her down into the seat beside her. "We shall go on together all through."

"But it is not *real* for me," Marjorie said, with a shade of regret in her tone; "I shall be examined and be a Radcliffe student too, if mother will let me. But I shall never teach like Rachel, I suppose, so it seems only make-believe for me. I forget it

when I am studying, because that part is real, but when I remember, I am often sorry that I do not need to teach."

"No, don't regret it, Marjorie," Miss Forrester said, "you will find work enough to do. Study in earnest as you do now, and the time will never come when it will seem 'make-believe.' Women who have no need to work for themselves may do so much noble work in helping others who must."

"I should like that," said Marjorie, brightening. "Perhaps I might help establish some training-schools for poor girls, or I might give a course of lessons to teachers who could not go to the college."

"There will be a thousand ways in which you can work when the time comes," said Grace. "There is almost always opportunity for people who have the will and the power. You never need fear, Marjorie, that money will shut any gates for you. The trouble is that people forget under how much wider and heavier obligations money lays them."

"I never will," said the girl, thoughtfully.

"You understand all our plans so well, Miss Forrester," said Kate. "Why did you never form any for yourself?"

"I did, my dear," said Grace, quietly, "but sometimes — as I was going to say to Marjorie when she lamented that she had no real need to teach — our circumstances change, and we find that the work we had laid out for ourselves is not the work we are to do."

"Oh, what did you want to do?" cried Kate, forgetting everything else in her eager curiosity; "tell us, Miss Forrester!"

"I should have liked to be a doctor," Grace replied, the color mounting to her brow. "I studied medicine with my father, and believed that I should go abroad to study some day. But my father died, and then — and then my own circumstances changed, and I found that the life I had planned was not to be the life for me after all. But I have always found work enough to do in spite of that, and so will you, Marjorie."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CABINET OF CURIOSITIES.

THE rainy day for which Effie had sighed was not long in making its appearance, one of those days of cold, sullen downpour which seems sadly out of place in June; and Miss Forrester was reminded of her promise to open the Japanese pagoda of curiosities.

The girls all gathered round as she unlocked it, pulled out the little drawers, and showed them the secret springs. There was a motley collection of treasures; pieces of brocade, ornaments in old-fashioned settings, shells from the South Sea islands, autographs of famous people, odd little carved trifles from India, and relics that had been picked up in all quarters of the globe.

"What is this?" cried Kate, lifting what seemed a blackened bouquet peeping out of the tissue paper in which it was carefully

wrapped, and with a faded ribbon hanging from the stems. "Such old, old crumbly flowers!"

"Yes, more than sixty years old," said Grace. "But that is mother's story, for I was not there to see."

"Do tell us about it, Mrs. Forrester," said the girls, appealing to the white-haired old lady.

"Those were the flowers that La Fayette gave my elder sister when he came back to America in 1824," Mrs. Forrester began, "and, though I was but a tiny child at the time, I have heard the story so often that I feel as if I had taken part in it.

"Little was talked of that summer except the coming of the guest whose very name America loved. He went in a sort of triumphal procession through every part of the country, and oh! what excitement prevailed when the children of the family heard that he was actually to pass our house. The elders might have whatever celebration they chose to welcome the stranger; the schoolgirls had planned their own little pageant for themselves.

"A friend of my sister Susan, named Adelia White, whom her friends considered a second Mrs. Hemans, was to write an ode. How often Susan has pointed out to me the little fan-shaped window in the Whites' barn, and told me that it was there among the haymows that Adelia wrote the famous poem! It was ready long before the coming of the guest, and then the question arose who should recite it? 'For, of course,' Adelia said, 'it would be impossible for *me* to recite what I had written. I should stammer and look conscious and silly. No, no; I could not do it—one of you girls must repeat it for me.'

"As Adelia was really a very shy girl, except on paper, her argument was unanswerable. It would not do for the famous ode to be spoiled in the repeating, so the next thing was to select a spokeswoman, and the choice fell on my sister Susan.

"'Because you are the prettiest of us all, you know,' Adelia said, kissing my sister's round, rosy cheek, 'and I am so glad you are to recite it.'

"Susan was really very pretty — ah, Grace, you need not smile! You never saw your aunt till she was a stout, middle-aged woman, far too plump for beauty. As she was popular as well as pretty, the choice gave general satisfaction, and all waited breathlessly for La Fayette's coming.

"No hint of the children's intended welcome had been whispered to the elders, but on that gala day they were naturally all dressed in their prettiest white dresses, and every hand large enough to hold a bouquet was filled with flowers. I dimly remember sitting on my tall father's shoulder, straining my eyes up the dusty road, though I had no very clear comprehension of what I was to see. Meanwhile the girls of my sister's set — some half-dozen girls of thirteen or fourteen — had slipped out of their several houses, and, going through the green field-paths, had managed to escape notice in the general excitement. Adelia had planned the mode of approach as well as the words of welcome, and, under her guidance, the little band of white-robed

maidens emerged from a clump of lilacs by the roadside just as the carriage in which La Fayette was seated turned the corner of the road. It must have been a pretty sight as the girls, their cheeks flushed, and their eyes sparkling with excitement, stood by the roadside, looking up eagerly, though shyly, at the stranger of whom they had heard so much, and strewing their flowers in his path.

"The carriage stopped. The courtly old Frenchman bowed smilingly again and again, laying his hand on his heart in a gallant foreign fashion that delighted the romantic school girls. Then Susan, admonished by a little push from Adelia, stepped forward, and, blushing very much, though with no awkward stammering, recited the ode!

"La Fayette rose to his feet, and made the girls a pretty little speech of acknowledgment, which I wish I could repeat to you. Then he kissed his hand to the group, and, taking from his button hole this very bouquet, put it in my sister's hand.

"'For your pretty words of welcome, *ma belle!*' he said, 'and for all your amiability, *mes demoiselles!*'

"He bowed again to the group, and the carriage was about to roll on.

"'Oh, no, sir!' cried Susan, blushing more than ever in her confusion at being taken for the poetess. 'I did not write it, indeed — it was Adelia!'

"'*Tiens donc!*' said the old Marquis, smiling with uplifted eyebrows, 'this for Mademoiselle Adele!' and he tied the flowers with this faded ribbon which still binds them, and which he took, perhaps, from his breast, which it had decorated. It has never been untied since that day, for, when my conscientious sister insisted on a division of spoils, Adelia, who had remained throughout in the background, delighted to have won her laurels *incog.*, declared that the knot which the Marquis's fingers had tied should never be unloosed, so my sister, much to her distress, had the whole of the tribute. How strange that all those bright young girls should be in their graves, and these crumbling flowers

and shreds of silk should still be here to tell the story!"

The girls gave a glance of increased respect at the venerable flowers, while Effie took from the next tiny drawer a rude metal ring on which two large pearls were clumsily fastened.

"It looks just like a nose-ring!" she said, laughing. "What a shame to spoil those lovely pearls by stringing them on that clumsy thing!"

"It *is* a nose-ring," said Grace, "and it was given to my grandfather by a real live savage chief."

"Oh, tell us about it, Miss Forrester!" cried the four girls in chorus. "How came your grandfather to know the savage chief, and why should he give him a nose-ring?"

"It was given as a token of gratitude," Grace replied, "and if it had not been for my grandfather's quick-wittedness, his Roman nose would have been pierced on the spot to hold this clumsy ring. You have seen his portrait in the dining-room — the portly old gentleman with the very aquiline nose? Though, as that portrait shows

you, he was a very hale and hearty old gentleman in his later days, he was quite an invalid in his youth, and the Havensholme remedy for all ills being a sea-voyage, it was arranged that he should go on a long trip to the Sandwich Islands. He had been devoting too much time to his books, — like my dear father, he studied medicine, — and though my greatgrandmother was loath to have him go off for so many months, the sea had not the same horror for Havensholme people that it might have had for inland mothers. So my grandfather sailed, and a weary time it must be before they could have tidings of him. So they thought at least, but news came far too soon! There was a terrible storm soon after the vessel sailed, and the story came back to Havensholme that the *Columbia*, with all on board, had gone to the bottom. My great-grandmother, however, refused to believe it.

"'Do not tell me!' she would say, shaking her head very positively. 'No ship ever disappeared like that without so much as a fragment of her timbers being

picked up. You may believe what you like —*I know* that my William is alive still!'

"So the weeks and months wore on, and at last it appeared that the poor brave mother had been right after all, though she learned it only through what seemed an even greater sorrow. A ship came into Havensholme harbor with a man on board who had been picked up in mid-ocean, adrift in a little boat, and half dead with hunger and thirst. He had belonged to the crew of the *Columbia*, which, he said, had weathered many storms, to be wrecked at last on an island in the Pacific which not even the captain could identify, as they had drifted far out of their course, and lost their compass and charts, but which the sailor believed to be inhabited by cannibals. 'At least, they had seen naked, dark-skinned men running down to the shore with clubs, when the sea had cast the poor half-drowned sailors on land, and, for his part, he had been glad enough to take his chance in the long boat, with four comrades, rather than trust himself among the natives.'

"'Had William been one of the four?'

"No, the sailor believed that the 'little doctor,' as they called him on board, had been washed off the deck just before the ship went to pieces. 'Better drown than be food for cannibals, I say!' he concluded; 'my poor mates were drowned too. One threw himself into the sea, raging mad with thirst, and I am the only one left to tell the story.'

"There could be no doubt that the tale was true, and my grandfather's poor mother mourned for her boy as dead, feeling that the sea had perhaps been less cruel to him than the savage islanders would have been.

"However, as I like myself to know at once that there is a good end to a sad story, I may as well tell you that my grandfather was *not* drowned and *not* eaten by the savages. What might have been his fate no one knows; the islanders seized and stripped him as they did the rest of the shipwrecked men; then they seemed to be holding an animated colloquy over him, and finally, after what seemed a decided difference of opinion, two stout natives seized him by the arms, and dragged him away to their

largest hut, bound him hand and foot, and so left him for a time, uncertain what was to be his fate.

"Fortunately, my grandfather, though a puny youth, was a very brave and cool-headed one, and, in spite of the terrible suspense which he must have felt, was able to observe what was going on about him. Stretched on the floor at the other end of the hut in which he was imprisoned lay a man who seemed to be in great pain, for he groaned pitifully from time to time, though he made no attempt to move. It was difficult to tell his rank from his garments, for his clothing was extremely scanty, but, from the number of his ornaments, my grandfather concluded that he must be the chief.

"Presently the whole band of savages returned, one bearing a plentiful supply of food, which he set before the prisoner. My grandfather at once concluded that, as he was very thin, the design was to fatten him; but, observing that the food was savory turtle and turtles' eggs, he wisely attacked it at once with the appetite of a hungry man,

not troubling himself as to the consequences.

"Meantime the rest of the band approached the sick man, and, while two raised him forcibly to his feet, supporting and dragging him along, one of the band danced about him, singing at the top of his lungs, apparently performing some strange incantations for his recovery. Then my grandfather saw, with indignant pity, that the poor savage's leg was broken, and that his rough treatment was causing him the most acute agony. He forgot all about his own peril, and thought only how he could induce his captors to let him handle the broken bones. Precisely how he did it I cannot tell you, but at last, by signs, he did contrive to express his meaning to the man who had brought him food, and who had remained squatting beside him and watching him eat.

"My grandfather told him by signs that he too had a leg broken, showing him how perfectly it had healed; he offered to cure the chief in the same way he had himself been cured, if they would cut his bonds.

His friendly attendant repeated this astonishing offer to the others, and, after much parley, the whole band was banished from the hut except this one man, with whose assistance my grandfather set the broken leg, using for bandages the tattered remnants of his own clothes, and thus reducing himself to the same airy attire as the rest of the islanders. Then he put his own leg in splints and lay down beside the chief, partly as an earnest of his good faith, partly to keep the patient quiet. A weary time of it he must have had; for, though of course he unbound his leg at intervals to attend to his patient, the confinement was irksome enough. However, his devotion served two purposes; it saved his own life during the period of the chief's convalescence, and it made the chief his firm friend. By the time the splints were taken off the patient's leg, there was certainly no more thought of devouring the doctor. In token of his gratitude, the chief took from his own nose this pearl ring, and, with many embraces, signified his intention of transferring it on the spot to my grandfather's.

This peril seemed more imminent than the other, but the captive's presence of mind did not desert him even then. He took the hand of each savage in turn, making each feel the curved bone of his Roman nose, pointing out by signs the danger of its breaking under the weight of the nose-ring, and, at the same time, signifying the immense superiority of the flattened noses of the islanders. This they smilingly acknowledged, and when the general complacency was at its height, my quick-witted grandfather put the nose-ring on his thumb, and, with many bows and grimaces, transferred his own seal-ring to the chief's little finger. Nothing could have given greater satisfaction than this proceeding, and, from that day, the captive was in a fair way to be killed by kindness."

"What a wonderful story!" said Rachel, as Grace paused. "It seems as if it must be one of Mayne Reid's stories, instead of something that really happened. But don't stop there, please, Miss Forrester! Do tell us how your grandfather escaped at last."

"He was a prisoner for more than a

year, but, as the islanders now considered him one of themselves, they allowed him to roam about as he chose. So it happened that, after he had given up all hope of being rescued, he chanced one day to be on the other side of the island with only a single companion. They had gone there to collect turtles' eggs. This side of the island was quite different from the other where my grandfather had been cast ashore. There was a little cove offering a safe harbor, and a smooth, shingly beach.

"The savage, tired with the long walk, lay down on the sand to sleep, and my grandfather rambled about alone. All of a sudden he saw a sight which made his heart almost bound out of his breast. He saw a boat on the beach, and four or five men collecting turtles' eggs, and capturing turtles, having come ashore for that purpose from a ship lying some little way off from the island. Then, indeed, I think, my grandfather lost his coolness for once. He rushed among them, forgetting his wild appearance, his long hair and beard, and tanned skin, and besought them, with

incoherent exclamations, to take him away with them. I should suppose that it must have been as hard at first to make them understand his story and believe him a white man, as it had been to make himself understood by the savages; but the sound of the mother-tongue soon convinced them, and by the time the poor islander waked from his nap, his white friend was nowhere to be seen. What was still better, my grandfather's health was completely restored by the year of out-of-door life in a warm climate, and he came back to his mother, not only a safe, but a sound man."

A little murmur of appreciation greeted this happy ending of Miss Forrester's story, and Marjorie had just opened a book of autographs, when Effie, whose bright eyes had been peeping about in quest of more treasures, and, if possible, another story of shipwreck, held up a little box which she had taken from a secret drawer, the spring of which she had accidentally discovered.

"Here is a lovely pearl ring, Miss Forrester," she said. "Did the chief give this

to your grandfather, too, or has it any wonderful story of its own?"

Effie's blue eyes were innocently turned upon Miss Forrester, as she asked the question; but to her astonishment and dismay, the quick color flushed into Grace's cheeks. She took the ring from Effie's hand, and only saying, quietly, "No, dear, no story at all; it is not even an heirloom," shut it again into its secret drawer. Only Kate's quick eyes took note of the ring, it was put away so quietly. Grace regained her self-possession at once, and proceeded to the history of the autographs; but Mrs. Forrester glanced anxiously at her daughter's face, and poor little Effie derived an uncomfortable sense of having committed some monstrous misdemeanor.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW MARJORIE'S MUTINY WAS NIPPED IN THE BUD.

THE next day happened to be Marjorie's day for a walk, and Rachel was her companion. As they neared the signpost which marked the turn to the Exton road, all Marjorie's attention became fixed on the stone wall bounding the fields, and Rachel's remarks fell on deaf ears.

"What is there remarkable about that stone wall, Marjorie?" she asked at last. "You have not once taken your eyes off it for the last five minutes."

"Oh, I'm only looking for Cliff's signal — there it is now! He'll meet us at four o'clock day after to-morrow somewhere along this road."

"How can you tell?" Rachel asked. "Signal, did you say? Oh, Marjorie, I

don't think you should make such arrangements with him after what Miss Forrester said. It does not seem like you — it is not honest."

"There is no dishonesty in it," said Marjorie, flushing hotly. "I shall always tell Miss Forrester when we meet him."

"But that would be dishonest," said Rachel, "for it would sound as if you met by accident, when, in reality, it was all arranged beforehand. Don't go, Marjorie."

"Surely I have a perfect right to walk with my own cousin. It is over-particular in Miss Forrester to object to it. Mamma would laugh at the idea of there being any harm in it."

"Do you think she would if she knew it was out of Exton bounds?" said Rachel; but Marjorie did not reply, and for a few minutes the friends walked on in silence.

"I *do* like Miss Forrester, Rachel," Marjorie said presently, as if she had been accused of disliking her, "but I think she is apt to be a little dictatorial about trifles and to make mountains out of molehills."

"Do you?" said Rachel, quietly, and

again there was nothing for Marjorie to reply.

"I suppose you won't go to walk day after to-morrow, then?" she said abruptly, as they reached the gate.

"No," said Rachel, "and I don't believe you will either, Marjorie."

"I want to take all four of you to drive this afternoon," Grace said, the next day but one, as the girls were putting away their school-books.

"I'd rather walk this afternoon, thank you, Miss Forrester," Marjorie said, feeling, in spite of herself, a little uncomfortable under the serene gaze.

"But this is a special drive," said Grace, pleasantly. "We will take the large three-seated wagon, and all drive down to the long beach, some miles off, and there, if it is pleasant, and we like it, we can stay and have tea in the open air."

"That would be nice," said Marjorie, her determined tone relaxing a little, "but I would rather go to walk this afternoon, thank you."

"Why, Marjorie, how odd of you!" cried

Effie, with a pout of remonstrance, "when it's such a nice plan, and we thought, Kate and I—"

"Never mind, Effie," said Grace, with a smiling glance. "We can take up Marjorie on the road, you know, after she has had her 'constitutional.' You will go in that direction, won't you, Marjorie, along the Exton road?"

"Yes," said Marjorie, coloring furiously, but determined that she would not falter in the least, though the wagon party should meet her walking with Cliff. "For of course there is nothing in the least wrong in it," she repeated to herself, doggedly.

Do what she would, however, she felt a little uncomfortable as she came through the hall at quarter of four, dressed for her walk, and heard the merry voices in the pantry, where Kate and Effie were helping Mehitable put up the hampers for tea.

"A pleasant walk to you, Marjorie!" called Grace from the parlor.

"I wonder why I do feel so like a humbug!" Marjorie said half-indignantly to herself, as she marched out of the gate,

her head very erect, but an uncomfortable prick at her conscience, nevertheless.

The road seemed unusually long, treeless, and dusty to-day, and it was a relief when the signpost loomed in the distance. "It is very warm," said Marjorie, fanning her flushed cheeks with her handkerchief, "but of course one must keep an appointment."

No Clifford, however, was there to keep his; and Marjorie, with a glance of chagrin at her watch, was slowly pacing round the triangular plot of dusty grass at the cross-roads, feeling that being obliged to wait for her cousin did put rather a different aspect on affairs, when a little note, lying half hidden under Cliff's signal stones, met her eyes. It was addressed to herself, and she hastily opened it.

"DEAR MARJORIE: You won't look for me, of course, at our tryst, after Miss Forrester's very jolly proposal. What a trump she is! I think we fellows can all manage to be there, though we may be a trifle late. But you would not thank me for taking you a long, dusty tramp in addition.

"C. D."

"What can he mean?" said Marjorie, as, completely mystified, she put the note in her pocket. "What proposal can Miss Forrester have made, and do the others all know, I wonder?"

As there was no one to answer her queries, Marjorie's only resource was to make the best of her way homeward, which she did with unruffled dignity, but inward mortification. The large wagon, crowded with merry faces, met her just as she reached the gate.

"There's Marjorie!" cried Effie, gleefully. "Why, what a short walk you took, after all!"

"Long enough for this warm afternoon, I am sure," said Grace, kindly, looking at the girl's flushed cheeks, and Rachel gave a quiet little roguish glance at her friend.

It was too much for Marjorie's innate frankness, and, with a desperate plunge, she exclaimed—

"I meant to stay longer. I expected to meet Clifford, but he sent me a note instead, saying something about an invitation, which I did not understand."

And she held out the note.

"Ah, now you have betrayed my secret!" said Grace, merrily, without, however, seeming to observe the proffered note. "Though, after all, it is no matter now, since they are coming. I sent an invitation to your cousin and some of his friends to join us on the beach for a clam-bake, and, as they could not be sure of coming till leave had been asked, I did not think it worth while to speak of it beforehand."

"Oh, that's the reason why we put up such a mammoth tea, is it?" said Kate, while Effie clapped her hands, exclaiming, "Yes, of course, and that's why we've been making the nicest things Mehitable has taught us, don't you know? Miss Forrester had to let me into the secret."

"Because Clifford challenged you about cooking, I suppose?" said Rachel.

Marjorie was silent, meanwhile. Could it have been from accident that Miss Forrester had taken no notice of her confession? There was no displeasure or reproach in Grace's clear, open, smiling gaze, which met Marjorie's as frankly as ever. "Had

A Knot of Tall Fellows grouped about a Heap of Stones and Brushwood Page 77

she not understood, then, that her authority had been defied?" the girl wondered. Her self-love was somewhat wounded by the thought that the confession which she had found it so hard to make had been all for nothing.

All heartburnings, however, vanished at the sight of the lovely evening scene that presently opened before them as the heavy wagon slowly descended the slope of loose sand, and they came out upon a beautiful wide beach almost as hard as a marble floor, and as smooth, except where the yellow sand had been rippled by the receding waves. The tide was going down lazily with a musical murmur, and the peaceful water, with its tiny wavelets, was all gilded and rosy in the sunset light. Little sand-peeps flitted merrily hither and thither in the wet margin left by the waters, and long blue shadows were cast on the sand by a knot of tall fellows grouped about a heap of stones and brushwood at the upper end of the beach.

"Ah, here you all are!" cried Clifford Dexter, advancing to meet them, his hand-

some face flushed by his exertions over the fire. "Now this was very good of you, Miss Forrester, and a deal better than a hot tramp through the dust, eh, Marjorie?"

Marjorie assented, with a side glance at Miss Forrester; but Grace's kind eyes met hers with such a hearty, though unspoken, "Put everything aside except enjoyment, my dear—that is all I ask of you!" that Marjorie was fain to obey.

They were a merry party. The boys had apparently accepted the challenge of the amateur cooks and devoted themselves to the preparation of the clams and roasted corn as if their reputation were at stake, and they were pledged to surpass the tarts and charlotte russe manufactured by Kate and Effie.

"But it isn't a fair test," as Effie remarked. "Who could help liking substantial things better than dainties in such hungry air as this?"

The ruddy sunset light had faded now, and all the merry faces grouped about the fire were in shadow. The boys threw on more logs, and the crackling pile burst into

fresh flames. A boat came gliding noiselessly up behind them as they sat with backs turned to the water in oblivion of the rising tide, which threw out a hint of its coming in faint whiffs of salty dampness.

"What is going on here?" called a voice from the boat, as it touched bottom on the sand. "I saw the light across the water, and came to investigate, but you are all so absorbed that not even one of you turns to look at the intruder. I suspect a clambake!"

"Is that you, Charley?" said Grace. "I did not know you were at home yet, or you should not have needed to steal into our picnic by the back-door, I assure you."

"Ah, Richards, you've come at a lucky time for me," said Clifford. "Sit down awhile, and I'll promise you the best shovelful of clams you ever tasted!"

The girls looked with lively interest at the newcomer as he seated himself beside Grace, but were inclined to be disappointed. The fitful flashes of firelight which gilded Effie's curls, and brought out Grace's fine profile in almost classic regularity, did not

soften the angles of Charles Richards's very gaunt figure, or smooth the outline of particularly irregular features, while, no doubt, it did conceal the brightness and kindliness which were expressed in his pleasant voice. So Marjorie, prone to be influenced by first impressions, turned back to her conversation with George Stanton, one of Cliff's schoolmates, leaving Kate and Rachel to improve their acquaintance with Mr. Richards, as they might choose.

"He does look rather like Don Quixote, doesn't he?" Stanton whispered; "but he's a trump when you know him. Do you think it would do to put anything so personal as an allusion to the Don into the category?"

What the "category" was did not transpire till later, when the party were at last summoned to the feast, and Stanton read the following impromptu as his own and Marjorie's joint production: —

I.

One evening in June, in the year '94,
A party were met on the Havensholme shore,

Intent on a real merry-making;
And if you'll permit me, their names I'll rehearse, —
Although mine may prove somewhat doggerel verse —
While the clams and the corn-ears are baking.

II.

First of all, then, as hostess Miss *Forrester* came,
And under her care, as befitted her name,
Four young saplings, slender and sprightly,
Who, transplanted awhile from their own native soil,
Most fully repaid her beneficent toil
By budding and blossoming brightly.

III.

A *May* flower, as rosy right here by the sea,
As when 'neath the shade of some tall forest tree,
By brown leaves and mosses half hidden;
Like violets her eyes, and like sunbeams her hair;
Much more I might add, but I really don't dare
To make pretty speeches unbidden!

IV.

Some *Deans*, I am told, have their fair share of pride,
But those must be Deans on the masculine side,
Pompous Churchmen and fallen from grace;

To know that this *Dean(e)* the foul slander belies,
You need do nothing more than just look at her eyes —
Leah's soft eyes in Rachel's fair face!

V.

The device of the *Clevelands*, of course, is a spade,
But one of the family, quite undismayed
By tales of ancestral tradition,
Has set up for herself with a brush as her crest,
A palette, paints, canvas, camp-stool, and the rest
Of the tools of an artist's condition.

VI.

In a narrative poem 'tis always expected
That the authors themselves should remain undissected,
Or, to put it more fairly and truly,
Neither *Hammond* nor *Stanton* allow any play
Upon words, and our genius knows no other way
Of expressing encomiums duly.

VII.

Of Miss Marjorie, then, we will say nothing more
Than that all maids, so christened, from Marjorie Daw,
To Sir Walter's bewitching wee maiden,
Have been charmers — while Georges, from England's saint, down
To Washington, G., of unblemished renown,
Have been heroes with laurel-wreaths laden!

VIII.

And, speaking of heroes, they have not departed,
For here, in our midst, is a *Richard(s)* Lion-hearted,
As the king of old ballad and story,
For, whether he bolts mathematical pills,
Or, Don Quixote-like, valiantly fights with windmills,
He leaves the field covered with glory.

IX.

Our crony, *Cliff Dexter*, in spite of his name,
Has so far acquired but a left-handed fame
In scaling the summits of learning;
But, growing more dext'rous with practice and time,
Who knows but to cliffs problematic he'll climb,
Both surname and Christian name earning?

X.

Dear *Smith*, *Brown*, and *Robinson*, prithee excuse,
What seems impolite in a tired, hungry Muse,
And let her present you as *Co*, —
For brains overtasked doctors recommend fish,
Clams, too, all agree, make a savory dish,
And oh! they are done now, I know!

The wagon was capable of holding more occupants than it had brought, and, on this occasion, it was stretched to very elastic dimensions to carry all the boys as far, at

least, as the cross-roads. They made the way merry with their songs and stories, and, when they parted at the cross-roads, it was with the friendliest farewells on either side, and the warmest hopes of meeting again soon.

"What a lovely time we have had!" said Effie, settling back in the depths of the wagon, with a little sigh of satisfaction. "Miss Forrester, you do know just how to get up the nicest surprises!"

Again Marjorie's conscience pricked her, and, under cover of the darkness, she let her hand rest for a moment on Grace's knee, saying, with her usual frank ringing tones a little softened, —

"I don't think you quite understood what I meant this afternoon, Miss Forrester; I had *planned* to walk with Cliff, you know."

"Oh, yes, I think I understood," said Grace, smilingly. "In fact, I felt almost sure of it before you told me."

"But you did not say anything," exclaimed Marjorie, startled by this unexpected avowal. "You did not say any-

thing, though you had forbidden our going."

"No, I did not say anything, I know," Grace rejoined quietly, "but then I had not forbidden it, Marjorie."

"Not forbidden it!" cried the four girls in chorus. "Why, we thought—"

"My dear girls," said Grace, looking from one to the other of the young faces leaning so eagerly forward in the dim light, "I don't *forbid*, simply because I don't command. In fact, I never mean to."

"Why, who is to, then, I should like to know?" said Kate, bluntly.

"Yourselves, I hope," said Grace; "at present I am waiting to find out whether my hope will be verified."

There was a moment of silence; then Effie gave a half-embarrassed, childish laugh; Rachel said, in a low tone, "Yes, I understand;" and Marjorie, still under cover of the darkness, dropped her hand into Grace's, and gave it a sudden pressure, which was heartily returned.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS VERY'S STORY.

AMONG the good people of Havensholme, whose acquaintance our four girls were not slow in making, was one who became a favorite with them all. This was a little, slender, prim old lady, always clad in an old-fashioned open dress, and swathed to the chin in folds of soft lace, while her head bristled with a huge tortoise-shell comb, a most unnecessary support for the few thin locks of hair which it served to fasten. Miss Very, the last survivor of six sisters, lived in a delightfully old, rambling house at the end of the long street in Havensholme, from which a wide sweep of the sea was visible.

"I often stand on the piazza, shading my eyes with my hand, and watching for a ship that never comes," the old lady said, one day; "it is a habit that belonged

to my childhood, when our fathers and brothers used to sail away from this port, and we children were always on the look-out to bring our elders news. Ah, my dear! all my memories are of the old days, you see!"

An invitation to tea at Miss Very's was always welcome to the four girls. The house was so redolent of sweet, spicy odors from the great Indian jars in the hall; the tea-table, with its delicate egg-shell china, its delicious cakes, and rich preserves, so attractive to schoolgirl eyes and palates; and the whole atmosphere of the place so suggestive of a story, that, as Kate said, "it was like finding the last volume of some delightful old novel — you were always longing to know the beginning!"

One summer evening three of the four girls were seated, after tea, by the long, open window, looking out at the moonlit ocean, and chatting cosily in the twilight. Effie, who had been ailing during the day, had reluctantly stayed at home, and Grace had remained with her.

"Miss Very," said Kate, suddenly, "is

it true that every unmarried woman has had a romance?"

"Why, Kate!" Rachel exclaimed reprovingly; but the old lady only gave her short, mild half-laugh, and said,—

"Do you ask that question, Miss Kate, because you want a chapter out of my life's history?"

"Oh, no, ma'am!" cried Kate, abashed; "I mean yes, of course, if you would be kind enough to tell it to us, but that was not what I was thinking of when I asked the question."

"And what were you thinking of, pray?"

"Of something that happened the other day," said Kate, emboldened by the darkness.

"Then I'm sure it can't have anything to do with *my* romance," said Miss Very, dryly. "What did happen the other day?"

"Why, we were looking over a cabinet of curiosities with Miss Forrester," Kate replied. "She told us delightful stories about some of them, but, just as she had finished

the history of an odd pearl ornament that had been given to her grandfather by a savage chief, Effie opened a little box that she found in a secret drawer, and there lay a lovely pearl ring. 'Did the chief give this to your grandfather, too?' she asked, quite innocently. But Miss Forrester only said 'No,' and took the ring and put it back in the drawer without another word. But I noticed that she grew quite red, and the tears came into her eyes. So I wondered if that could have been her romance."

"Oh, Kate! you oughtn't to ask such questions," said Rachel.

"Why, there's no harm in it, is there, Miss Very? I'm sure you must know all about it, and I don't ask just from curiosity, of course."

"Ah!" said Miss Very, with a sigh, "Grace Forrester has a romance, sure enough, and, as you say, I know all about it. As I am very sure that you don't ask from vulgar curiosity, I think I may tell you, since it can only make you love and respect Miss Forrester the more."

"There, girls!" cried Kate, triumphantly, and the three drew nearer to the story-teller in eager curiosity.

"I suppose," said the old lady, settling herself in her high-backed chair, with a rustle of her silk skirts, and the mild satisfaction which even very old ladies feel in having a story to tell, "you have noticed the great house on the hill which stands empty?"

"Yes," said Marjorie, "and often walked through the grounds and the greenhouses. Miss Forrester said that people were allowed to, when we asked if we might go."

"And did she go with you?" asked Miss Very, with quick interest.

"No, she never has been there with us, I believe, though she generally does drive in her pony-carriage wherever we walk."

"She wouldn't be likely to go *there*, I think," said Miss Very, sententiously, "though all through her childhood and girlhood she was in and out of the house like a daughter of the family."

"That was when the Rolfes spent their summers there, I suppose?" said Rachel.

"Yes, and Grace grew up with Ellen and

Kenelm Rolfe. She had no sisters, and her brothers were much older than herself. Ellen Rolfe was always delicate, but Kenelm was full of fun and life, and he and little Grace were like brother and sister. I can see him now, handsome fellow! with his bright blue eyes full of roguery, and his fair hair curling round his forehead, and Grace, sturdy, honest little creature, always so ready to step forward and take more than her share of the blame for any mischief the pair got into."

"I think it must be his photograph that hangs in Miss Forrester's room," said Marjorie; and, as Miss Very nodded assent, the girls looked at each other and drew still nearer the narrator, feeling that the story had redoubled interest now that they could form a picture of the hero.

"So they grew up as playmates, together in summer, but separated in winter when the Rolfes were in their New York home. Mrs. Rolfe was a widow, and Dr. Forrester was a thoroughly valued friend. I think she was often glad of his advice in managing Kenelm, for he was a wilful fellow, with all his

winning ways, and, unless for love, would seldom take any counsel except his own.

"Oh, I do hope he was good enough for Miss Forrester!" little Rachel said earnestly.

"Yes, yes, my dear, he was only a little wayward and spoiled with petting, as only sons are apt to be — inclined, too, to think himself hardly used if he did not have everything just his own way. Grace had rather a high standard of life and duty, it seems to me, but that's neither here nor there. Nobody was in the least surprised when they were engaged, but everybody was delighted, and Mrs. Rolfe and Ellen most of all."

"But Miss Forrester told us she meant to be a doctor," said Kate. "She studied medicine with her father, and had planned going abroad."

"Yes, I know. That is part of the story, and just what I am coming to. I call it an engagement because Kenelm and his mother and sister would have it so; but, with Grace, it was always a conditional one. She said, very sensibly, that Kenelm, who was not through college when the engagement

leaked out, had never seen anything of the world, and, before he could be sure that his old playmate was the one woman for him, he must have some opportunity of comparing her with others. In vain he protested — pretty fierily, too, I fancy! Grace was firm, and, after his class-day, he set out on a long tour.

"Meanwhile Grace had been quietly studying with her father for years, and, before Mr. Rolfe went away, she told him that it was her wish, if she could be spared at home, to study medicine abroad for a year.

"'How absurd, when you are to be my wife!' he said. 'Are we to be Mr. and *Dr.* Rolfe, pray?'

"'No, I think not,' said Grace, laughing. 'If I am ever *Mrs.* Rolfe, that title will be enough for me. But, Keneim dear, I should be none the worse wife for having carried out the plan my father formed for me in my childhood. Let me study through this year of probation, and if I should never be your wife —'

"'But you shall be!' he cried. 'How-

ever, take your own way, Grace — it will make no difference in the end.'

"So they parted, Kenelm to go abroad at once, on a foreign tour, Grace to keep on with her studies till the autumn, when it was understood that she was to go to Zurich. However, 'Man proposes, God disposes.' That summer, as Dr. Forrester was driving home late one evening, after seeing a patient, he was overtaken by a thunder-storm, while he was in a lonely wood-road. The horse took fright at the blinding flashes, and the doctor got out to soothe the animal with his voice, when a tree, falling across the road, struck and killed him instantly. The horse broke away, mad with terror, and came rushing home with the broken buggy behind him: and there, in the wood-road, they found the doctor's body."

"Oh, poor Mrs. Forrester!" said Kate. "How can she look so placid and sweet?"

"I think that people who have had the hardest sorrows to bear always do," said Marjorie, in a low tone. She was thinking of her own widowed mother.

"After many struggles known only to God and themselves," said the old lady, shaking her head. "But He gives the strength. Ah! it was a sad loss to us all! Dr. Forrester was one of those doctors who are everybody's best friend. As for Grace, poor child! she had fairly idolized her father, and had always been his pet and darling. But from that moment there was no more talk of her going abroad to study medicine. She just devoted herself, heart and soul, to her mother, and seemed not to have another thought."

"Not even of Mr. Rolfe?" said Kate.

"Oh, yes, his letters were her best comfort, for, though he declared, when he was angry with her for insisting on a conditional engagement, that she was 'cold,' and did not care for him as he did for her, it was far from being the truth. She loved him with all her heart, and that is a very deep and tender one."

"Then why—" Rachel began hesitatingly.

"Ah, my dear! that is the saddest part of the story. No doubt you have

often wondered to see that strong, fine figure on crutches. No young girl was ever more active on her feet than Grace Forrester till she was twenty-one."

"So Mehitable told us," said Marjorie. She spoke because the others were silent, and Miss Very seemed to expect a reply. But her voice sounded cold and hard, for, strange as it seems, the subject always froze Marjorie.

"How did it happen, Miss Very?" Kate asked at last.

"There was only one way in which it could happen," the old spinster replied. "Grace Forrester was not one to rush into danger, — nothing foolhardy about her, with all her courage and spirit! But, when other people were concerned, she forgot all about herself. She was a famous skater in those days, and her one relaxation, during that hard winter, was to go out on the ice and skim about for an hour or two, then return to her mother with renewed cheerfulness.

"One day in February, when we had had some mild days, she was skating on the

pond you passed on your way here. There was no one on the ice except herself and one little fellow far out in the middle of the pond. Grace looked at him and saw that he was skating carelessly, not noticing the air-holes. She called to him, but either because he did not hear, or did not choose to obey, he paid no attention to her. So then she started out toward him, and just at that moment the boy skated over one of the holes, threw up his hands, gave one shout for help, and disappeared under the ice. Grace skated up to him at once. She stooped down over the hole, and clutched the boy as he rose from under the ice-cold water. She succeeded in dragging him out, but the weight of the two was too much for the rotten ice. It split and cracked in all directions, and, though Grace managed to keep the unconscious boy's head up, she could not succeed in gaining a foothold with him. Still, she was a strong, brave swimmer, and she would not drown without a struggle for life. She clung to the edges of the ice, kept herself and the child afloat, in spite of her heavy clothing, for

she was drenched to the waist, of course, and never lost hope. At last a sleigh with a man in it, came in sight on the road, and oh! how she did call for help!

"The man was a burly carter from the neighborhood, one who knew Dr. Forrester's daughter as all the poor people about here do; but when he told the story, his voice shook as mine does now. He said Grace would not let him come very near. 'There's no use in three people drowning!' she said; 'but if he would just throw her the end of a rope he happened to have in his sleigh, she would manage.'

"And so she did; she pulled herself out, still with the little boy in her arms, and on to the firm ice. Then the carter took her up in his arms like a baby,—for either from the weight of her wet clothes, or the cold, she could not walk a step,—and laid her in his sleigh and brought her home. The half-drowned boy was all right in a day or two, but Grace,—well, I suppose it was the long waiting in the deathly cold water—strain on the nervous system, the doctors said,—but her limbs were paralyzed from

the ankles up, and since that day she has never walked a step without crutches."

"Oh! how could she bear it?" cried Marjorie, while Kate groaned in sympathy, and Rachel wiped away the silent tears.

"I never saw anything like her patience and cheerfulness," replied Miss Very. "At first she was sure that she should recover; then, when the doctors began to talk less hopefully, she was so ready to dwell on the slight hope they did hold out that some great shock might yet bring back the power of motion to her paralyzed limbs. It was not as if she could not bear to have that hope disappointed, either, but rather as a comfort to her mother, who would have despaired if Grace had not been hopeful. Ah! if angels ever do appear in the flesh, Grace Forrester was one that winter!"

Miss Very wiped away her tears, patted the lace about her withered throat, and, leaning back in her chair, seemed to have come to the end of her story.

"But Mr. Rolfe, Miss Very!" Kate exclaimed. "Surely he cared more than ever for Miss Forrester after that, didn't he?"

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"Truly, I believe he did, my dear," said the old lady, gravely. "He came home at once, poor fellow, as soon as Mrs. Forrester's letter reached him,— Grace did not know that her mother had written, — and just begged and pleaded with her to be his wife, to let him carry her away, and try everything that money and foreign doctors could do to cure her."

"And she would not?" cried Kate.

Miss Very shook her head. "Grace Forrester is very proud, my dear. She could not bear to be a burden to any one, least of all to one whom she loved so dearly. She told him she could not marry him, though her heart was all his; she should suffer doubly in thinking that she brought suffering upon him.

"'And do I not suffer now?' he cried, in his hot way; for Mrs. Forrester told me all about it.

"'That would be for a lifetime,' Grace said. 'Now, though you will never cease to be sorry for me, you will not have me always before your eyes. No, dear Kenelm, you must not urge me, it cannot be. You

are unhappy now, I know, but that will not last forever, and if you should find happiness with any one else, no one would rejoice more than I.'

"'I never shall,' said Kenelm. 'You are cruel, Grace.'"

"And I think she was!" cried Marjorie, hotly.

"Why, you would have done just the same yourself," said Kate. "You are just as proud, Marjorie."

"Nobody can tell what I should do till I am tried. Go on, Miss Very, please. What was the end?"

"The end was, my dear, that Kenelm Rolfe went off in anger to India. All he could obtain from Grace was a promise that, if ever her lameness were cured, she would be his wife. The next we heard was that he had thrown over all his plans for a profession, and gone off to India, where his father had carried on business in his lifetime, and where the firm still stood in his name. He said he should never come back."

"And how did his mother and sister feel about it?" asked Marjorie.

"They quite agreed with Grace at first in thinking that the engagement should be broken, but after Kenelm went off to India, they turned round and blamed her for it. That is, I hear so, and women are just so unreasonable sometimes. But they never come here now, and the place is shut up, as you see."

"Oh, how sad it all is!" said Rachel, with a sigh. "Thank you for telling us, Miss Very."

"And we shall all love Miss Forrester more than ever," Kate added warmly. "You think she was right, don't you, Miss Very, though Marjorie doesn't?"

"I don't pretend to judge of that, my dear. Grace had her reasons, I dare say; perhaps she thought that his constancy must be put to the proof. But I confess my heart often aches for the poor young man."

"Ah, Marjorie!" Rachel said playfully, as the girls walked home, "how you do love to be contrary-minded, don't you? You know you didn't mean what you said—you know you thought Miss Forrester just as noble and generous as Kate did!"

"Yes, I believe I did, Ray," Marjorie replied, with a mixture of frankness and reluctance that made her tone very winning, "only I don't like to have my opinions held up to me 'cut and dried,' you know. I'm sure Miss Forrester was splendidly brave and generous, and I do admire her for it!"

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE WEATHERCOCKS POINTED IN NEWPORT.

On Marjorie's softened mood arrived a little note from her mother.

"My dear Girl, — Rosamond begs so earnestly that she may be allowed to 'have you all to herself' for a few days before the wedding, that I have yielded to her entreaties, and, unless it interferes with any of Miss Forrester's plans for you, will send Susan as escort. Let me hear from you at once.

"Your Loving Mother."

But when had anything suggested by Rosamond ever interfered with her little cousin's plans? From her very babyhood, Marjorie had been in Rosamond's chains, finding their gilding of sweet words and caresses so pleasant that she never felt their

weight. She could scarcely wait for Susan's arrival before packing her trunk, and she found the roots which her heart had begun to strike in Havensholme soil far more easily pulled up than she could have believed possible a week before.

"Marjorie does not care a red cent for any of us when she can have her dear cousin Rosamond," said Kate, piqued, though smiling. "It isn't very flattering to you, Miss Forrester, that she is so glad to go."

Grace, however, smiled serenely and Marjorie's eager self-defence against the charge of fickleness was quite thrown away. When the morning of her departure came, and she set out with Susan, it was even a trifle mortifying that her going should seem to make so little difference to the busy group on the piazza.

"And we really are very happy with Miss Forrester," she said to herself, "but then she is not Rosamond, and this is not Redstone Crag!"

It is no wonder that the summer home of her childhood should be so dear to Marjorie, for there was scarcely a more beauti-

ful place in Newport. The house, built of the reddish stone which gave its name to the estate, stood high on a cliff overlooking the sea, and, with its tower mantled with ivy, was a landmark for a long distance. The avenue led up through glowing flower-beds, and on the farther side of the house the crag fell away sharply into the water. What house could be more beautiful than this summer mansion of the Dexters and Hammonds, where Marjorie had grown up from infancy in an atmosphere of luxury, and fond, half-foolish petting?

She was sitting, on the morning after her arrival, in Rosamond's boudoir, a pretty room, all rose-color and white, and Rosamond herself, in a dainty pink wrapper, the prettiest thing in it. Marjorie was in her gayest spirits, happy to be at home, and yet glad to have been able to say honestly, in answer to her mother's inquiries,—

"Yes, we are really happy at Havensholme, mamma. It is so lovely, Mrs. Forrester is so good to us, and Miss Forrester is—"

"What, Marjorie?" as the girl hesitated.

"Very wise, I think," said Marjorie, blurting the words out oddly, and in a laconic fashion peculiar to her when she did not care to be questioned farther. Mrs. Hammond, however, was well content with the reply, and wise enough not to urge further confidences till her daughter should be ready to bestow them.

Rosamond was less judicious, and, as the two sat together in the boudoir, she began coaxingly.

"Now, then, Queenie, let me hear all about the new home, and, if you confide to me that Miss Forrester is a bit of a tyrant, I promise not to betray you."

"But she isn't," said Marjorie, "though I fancied she was going to be, and was all ready to have my own way in spite of her."

"And do you?" laughed Rosamond.

"Why, I haven't thought much about it lately, and really there has only been one thing — besides," catching herself up quickly, "she is such an interesting person, Rosamond; she has quite a story, you know."

"Let me hear it," said her cousin, settling herself more comfortably on her cushions, "unless you will be committing a breach of confidence in telling me."

"Oh, no, I think not," said Marjorie, hesitating a little; "Miss Very told us, and she said nothing about keeping it to ourselves."

"Then tell it by all means," said Rosamond, "though I would not put too much faith in an old maid's injunctions not to tell. They generally mean simply, 'Pass this bit of gossip along!'"

So Grace's story followed, retold with much kindling of the young face, and a warmth of enthusiasm of which Miss Very's faded features and feeble voice were scarcely capable.

When Marjorie had finished, however, her cousin remained silent.

"I thought it a little hard-hearted in Miss Forrester," Marjorie concluded, "though the girls laughed when I said so, and declared I should have done the same thing myself. What do you think, Rosamond?"

Her cousin shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"The only decent thing to be done under the circumstances, my dear. But, between ourselves, your old Havensholme gossip knows only the outside of the story, the version Miss Forrester's friends tell, I suppose. Now *his* friends —"

"Why, did you know about it, then?" exclaimed Marjorie, astonished. "Do you know Mr. Rolfe?"

"One could hardly be in New York society without knowing Ellen Rolfe. As to knowing the story, rumor always spreads faster than anything else, you may be sure. I knew all the story except the name of the heroine — some country doctor's daughter, report said. But the true version is that the Rolfes themselves would not hear of the engagement going on, and, if Dame Grundy said truly, Mr. Kenelm Rolfe was not by any means sorry to avail himself of the opening in India for getting quietly out of the business."

"Oh!" said Marjorie. There was a world of chagrin and disappointed schoolgirl romance in the monosyllable.

Her cousin laughed. "I'm sorry to

knock down your card-house, my pet; but the world seems a great deal prettier when we are fourteen than when we are twenty-three! Now tell me what the one thing was, in which Miss Forrester and you had a contest of wills and she gained the day."

"I did not say that," returned Marjorie, reddening. "It was only a silly plan of Cliff's and mine for walking together."

"What! and Miss Forrester would not allow that? Why, she is a very dragon without the claws, Marjorie!"

"She did not forbid it, though I knew very well that she did not wish it, for Havensholme is 'out of bounds' for Exton schoolboys. However, Cliff and I were determined to have our own way about it, so we agreed on a secret signal for our hours of meeting, and, on the first afternoon, I set out."

"Well, go on," said Rosamond, with an amused smile. "What ingenious means did Miss Forrester adopt to foil you?"

"None," said Marjorie, stoutly; "but

she had arranged a picnic for that afternoon, so Cliff could not come, but we met him, with some of the schoolboys, on the beach, and had a delightful time. I was quite ashamed of myself for going off in such a sneaking fashion, and imagining that Miss Forrester was trying to tyrannize over us, when, in reality, she was only thinking of our having a good time."

"So you mentally resolved to do so no more, eh?" said Rosamond, laughing, and patting the girl's shoulder caressingly. "Ah, good little Marjorie, and sagacious Miss Forrester to plan it all so cleverly! I see she understands how to get the upper hand of you better than any of us. Now run, dear, and dress for a drive. I mean to give my invitations to the Lawn Tennis Club in person, and I must have you with me. Clarence comes down day after to-morrow, and then good-by to Cousin Rosamond!"

And Marjorie left the room, wondering why she felt less gratefully determined that Miss Forrester should have no more

trouble about that foolish matter of Cliff's companionship, than she had been before her talk with her cousin.

Mr. Clarence Lea arrived, but his coming was, by no means, the signal for a "good-by" to Cousin Rosamond. On the contrary, he seemed to divine that there was no surer way of pleasing his betrothed than by paying attentions to her pet, and, between the two, Marjorie's girlish head was in a fair way to be turned. The days went by in a whirl of gayety, and it is no wonder that Marjorie found small time to tell her mother more of Havensholme experiences.

"Have you written to the girls yet?" Mrs. Hammond asked, once or twice.

"Oh, I mean to, to-morrow," Marjorie would reply, and then, at last, with a little compunction, as she thought of the half-dozen unanswered letters in her desk, "No, I haven't written yet, mamma, but they will like so much better to hear about the wedding than to read about it, and I shall be going back so soon now."

A heavy sigh closed the speech.

"So sorry to go back, Marjorie?" asked her mother, smiling.

"Not exactly," said the girl, struggling with a rising lump in her throat, "but — but I do wish this could go on forever!"

The night before the wedding had come, and Cliff's arrival was momentarily expected. As Marjorie stood by the open glass door leading to the veranda, watching for her cousin, Mr. Lea came across the lawn, smiling, with a little box in his hand.

"Hold out your arm, Marjorie," he said, and clasped a beautiful bracelet on her wrist.

"For me? Oh, Mr. Lea!" cried the girl, delightedly.

"For my bridesmaid, yes; but you must change the 'Mr. Lea,' to 'Cousin Clarence' before to-morrow, you know, for I don't receive thanks under any other name."

"What's up, Marjorie?" cried Cliff's merry voice, as the girl stood dimpling and flushing under the cousinly salute which followed the words. "You don't look very homesick for Havensholme, at any rate."

"I should think not, indeed!" said Marjorie, gayly. "Only look, Cliff, at my bridesmaid's present."

"Ay, very pretty," said Cliff, carelessly, with a glance at the bracelet, "we are regularly in for it to-morrow, you and I? So now let's hear all you have to tell of home doings, and then I'll give you a budget from Havensholme."

"How are all the girls? That's all I want to know till after the wedding."

"All well, and as happy as larks; but, Marjorie, I can't be choked off in that fashion when I have my news budget just on my tongue's end. Kate and Charley Richards are as thick as possible, already, and go off on long sketching expeditions every bright afternoon."

"And what does Miss Forrester say to that?" asked Marjorie, roguishly.

"Oh, she is as interested as Kate—but I say, Marjorie, now you mention it, that does seem a little hard on us two, doesn't it? A year ago Richards was an Exton fellow like the rest of us, and—oh, there's just the best saddle-horse I ever did see

for a lady's riding at Topley's! What a shame we can't go!"

"And can't we?" said Marjorie; "I've improved ever so much in riding, for I've been out with Cousin Clarence nearly every day for a fortnight."

"Good for you, Marjorie!" cried Cliff, with a gleeful slap of his hand on his knee. "'*Can't* we?' Of course we can if you say the word! I'll settle it all."

"So far as I am concerned, I'm sure we can go," said Marjorie, with a smiling shrug, unconsciously caught from Rosamond. "We'll arrange it all when I get back. What is the rest of your news, Cliff?"

"Nothing much, I suppose. You know the Rolfe place, which has been shut up for so long, with no one in it except the housekeeper and gardener? Well, that's open at last."

"No! is it?" exclaimed Marjorie, with sudden interest. "Who is there? Two ladies?"

"No, I think not. I have seen only a young man, with a sunburned face and light hair. He rides a splendid chestnut,

and — why, what's the matter, Marjorie? You're all eyes!"

"You don't mean," cried Marjorie, with intense eagerness, "you don't mean that Mr. Kenelm Rolfe has come home from India, after all? Then Rosamond must have been wrong!"

"Rosamond? What does she know about it, or you either, for that matter? Well, if I've chanced on a mystery, I'm no wiser for it myself, I'm sure. Do tell me what you mean, won't you?"

But here his cousin became discreetly silent, and no coaxing of Cliff's could elicit another word from her about the mysterious tenant of the deserted house.

A lovely, bright July day was the wedding morning; the great rolling masses of white cloud that flecked the blue sky somewhat tempered the fierceness of the midsummer sunshine, while grass and trees still kept their luxuriant freshness. The picturesque little church was a bower of blossoms, and crowded to its utmost capacity; but not even the presence of Newport's gayest guests had power to turn the day into an

ordinary gala occasion for Marjorie and the young cousin who acted as second bridesmaid. As the two girls followed Rosamond up the aisle, their bright, fresh young faces were sobered into a sweet solemnity, and surely no one could have listened with a deeper thrill of awe to the words, never less impressive because so familiar, "We are gathered together here in the sight of God and in the face of this company," etc., than did Marjorie. Indeed, she looked so grave throughout the day that Mr. Lea rallied her on her solemn face, asking her if she could reasonably expect him to mingle his tears with hers.

"I hate people who cry at weddings!" said Marjorie, half laughing.

"Then mind you don't set them an example!" he rejoined; and Marjorie got through the wedding reception bravely, and saw her favorite cousin drive off with the prospect of a two years' sojourn in Europe before her without so much as the suspicion of a tear.

"Good luck, dearest Rosamond!" she called after her, throwing a bouquet into

one carriage window as an offset to Cliff's unerring aim of the traditional old shoe through the other. Then, turning to her mother, who stood beside her, she put her arm through hers, and drew her out on the deserted veranda.

"Why can't things last forever?" she exclaimed, half defiantly. "Pleasant things, I mean, of course."

"But who is to decide what those are?" asked Mrs. Hammond, putting her arm round the girl's waist. "One man's blessing is another man's bane, you know."

"I hope you don't mean that you think summer and Newport can ever be half so pleasant to me without Rosamond?"

"No, little daughter, only thinking that perhaps Marjorie Hammond may not now have such a hard time in deciding which is her genuine self, the summer or the winter edition."

"Do you think me so very weak, mother?" said Marjorie, coloring. "No one thinks so but you."

"And your candid little self, Marjorie. We are all weak, you know, when we let

our affections blind our judgment." And whether because the excitement of the day had wearied Marjorie's usually unflagging spirits, or because the shade of solemnity in her joy had made her more tender and teachable than usual, she listened to the charge without a word of remonstrance or argument.

CHAPTER X.

AN ADMIRABLE CRICHTON.

It is no unusual experience for people who have been absent, amid scenes very different from those they left behind them, to return to their old associations with a sort of wonder as to how the little stay-at-home world has been wagging without them, and, possibly, to feel a slight chagrin at finding that they have been scarcely missed.

Marjorie's face looked unwontedly grave during the morning after her return to Havensholme, and it was quite evident to Miss Forrester that she was struggling against rising homesickness. She made no remark, however, and the morning passed off as usual.

But no sooner was the early dinner over than it became evident that a new phase of interest had awakened in Marjorie's absence.

Kate had got together her artist paraphernalia, camp-stool, white umbrella, and sketch-book, and now stood eagerly waiting on the piazza. Effie skipped up and down the steps, exclaiming at intervals, "Nobody yet, Kate," and even Rachel, walking arm-in-arm with Marjorie, scanned the dusty road with interest.

"What is it?" asked Marjorie, at last, her interest awakened.

"Only that Mr. Richards is going to take Kate over to the Lighthouse Island, sketching," said Effie, "and we shall row over there by and by to join them."

"Yes," chimed in Rachel, "and Mr. Richards says that island is such a wonderful place for wild-flowers. Don't forget your pressing-book, Marjorie."

"But that isn't fair," said Kate, good-naturedly; "we are going for sketching, you know, and if you carry Mr. Richards off to botanize —"

"But you mustn't be stingy, Kate!" cried Effie; "you and Mr. Richards sketch all the time, and Marjorie hasn't had a chance to get acquainted with him yet, you know."

"All the time!" exclaimed Kate, on the

defensive. "Why, only the last time we went, he and Rachel got so interested talking about the new mission school that he hardly looked once at my sketch!"

"Why, girls!" said Marjorie, half laughing, half scornful, "you seem to be all on the point of quarrelling about this Mr. Richards! Can't you do anything without him, then? I'm sure I won't interfere with Kate."

"He's so nice you can't help liking him, Marjorie," said little Effie, somewhat piqued, for Marjorie's tacit or outspoken disapproval always had its weight with her, "and we don't quarrel about him, either. But he is always contriving to interest us in something about the place. That makes us feel so at home, you know."

"Very likely," said Marjorie, with a shrug, "but I don't believe your hero is very interesting in himself, Effie."

And Marjorie walked off to the other end of the piazza, where Miss Forrester was sitting, leaving the little party rather crestfallen.

"Charley is a dear, kind-hearted fellow, though he is a little uncouth," said Grace,

looking up with her cheery smile, quite as if Marjorie's pettishness were only natural. "He has endeared himself very much to the girls because he takes so much interest in all their pursuits. He is popular with the Exton boys, too."

"Yes," said Marjorie, absently. Her eyes were fixed on the water with a wide-open, wistful look, and Grace's quick sympathies divined the homesickness which she was too proud to show.

"There is a sort of hearty enthusiasm about him that carries everything along with him. This mission Sunday-school is a new enterprise of his, undertaken with the idea of interesting the children of the mill people at Dorley. They are a wild little brood, hard-worked throughout the week, and sadly neglected and uncared for at home — just the children of whom it makes one's heart ache to think. But Charley, who makes friends wherever he goes, has somehow managed to awaken an interest in them, and they come in crowds the long dusty tramp to school between services."

"I should think that Dr. Richards was

the one to be interested in the Sunday-school," said Marjorie, rather languidly.

"No, that is an innovation of Charley's own, and his father, though he approves, does not meddle with innovations. Charley calls it the 'Mission to the Heathen at Home,' and really many of the poor little things listen to the Bible stories as if they had never heard anything of the kind before — so the girls say."

"But surely they should have heard them," said Marjorie, ready, as usual, for an argument. "Why has not Dr. Richards gone about among them before? It does not seem right that they should have been untaught for so long."

"They have been very hard to reach," said Grace, with a half smile at the youthful intolerance of Marjorie's remark — schoolgirls are always so ready to criticise their elders. "They do not properly belong to this parish, and perhaps, if their little hearts had not been opened by an out-of-the-way visitor like Charley, they might not have been reached now. A good many things chance happily in this

world, you know, and among the happy chances were Charley's sketching-tramps to Dorley. He found models among the little ragged boys and girls, and so arose the mission school. He is superintendent, and all whom he can interest are teachers."

"I should like to teach children who have never had a chance to learn," said Marjorie, with more interest.

"Rachel is our best teacher," said Grace. "The first Sunday a class of rough, big boys was given to her, only because there was no one else to take it, and I think Mr. Richards was afraid poor Ray would be quite worn out by the end of the hour. But, to every one's surprise, the boys were quieter than ever before, and she has gone on with them ever since. I think her gentle manners and soft voice must awaken a sort of chivalry in them, for they almost always listen respectfully, and often as if they were really interested."

Marjorie colored brightly with pleasure.

"Oh, I can assure you Rachel has something more than her gentle, soft, little tone to help her, Miss Forrester," she

said, eagerly; "she has a great deal of firmness too. She is never in the least fluttered or afraid, and that is the sort of thing that gives one real authority."

There was something very winning in Marjorie's enthusiastic praise of people whom she thoroughly loved and respected, and Grace looked at her with a pleased softening of her fine face, as the little cloud of pettishness vanished before her generous ardor in speaking of her friend.

They were soon on their way to join the sketching-party on the Lighthouse Island. Just as they had embarked at the little wharf and settled themselves in the dory, bobbing up and down on the bright water, Marjorie and Effie at the oars, Grace at the rudder, a sudden exclamation from the latter made both girls turn to look at her. Her eyes were fixed on the road, from which a steep, rather muddy descent led abruptly to the little pier. Marjorie's gaze followed hers, but there was no apparent cause for the sudden start. A young man on a chestnut horse was galloping along the road, almost out of sight now, and he

had probably not noticed the little boating-party.

"What is the matter, Miss Forrester?" Effie exclaimed. "Are you tired? Would you rather not go?"

"Nothing is the matter, dear," Grace replied quietly. "I was startled at something, that is all; and so far from not going, Effie, I will change seats with you or Marjorie if you will let me, and row for a while."

Both girls liked to watch Miss Forrester rowing; it was evidently a physical pleasure to her to feel that the free power of motion, impeded in her lower limbs, could still exercise itself in her arms; and, as she rowed, a clear, happy light never failed to come into her eyes, and a bright color into her cheeks. The startled, troubled expression gradually faded from her face, and a peaceful brightness spread over it.

They soon reached the island, a round green little spot, looking, from the opposite shore, much like a pincushion afloat on the waves. A lighthouse crowned the rocky height on the farther side of the island, its

white tower by day, and red and yellow light at night, showing far across the water. Meadow-land, so luxuriantly green that it suggested bogs and held out the hope of wild orchids, gave pasturage to the sheep and goats which led as lonely a life on the island as the lighthouse keeper, their owner. Above the tiny beach where the girls landed was a picturesque clump of pines, bristling at every imaginable angle of inclination, from a high beetling crag — and this afforded a lovely view of the shore, with its smiling inlets. Kate's white umbrella among the pines was perceptible a long way off to the party approaching in the rowboat.

"Oh, have you come?" was her rather equivocal welcome, as the boat grated on the pebbles. "Now you must go and help them land, Mr. Richards. And they will want you to show them where the sabbatia grows. I don't care about anything but this foreground just now, thank you, and I can work better for having Miss Forrester at my elbow, if you others will please go."

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Kate's absorption in the sketch of the moment was so genuine, and her acknowledgment of indifference to all besides so amusingly frank, that nobody could take offence, though told so plainly that their room was better than their company. The three girls set out merrily under Charles Richards's guidance, and Grace sat down among the pine needles beside Kate's easel.

The tall, long-limbed fellow swung along in silence for some moments by Marjorie's side, while she gave him, now and then, amused glances from her clear brown eyes.

"He has a nice earnest face, as the girls say," she said to herself, "but how can an artist be so awkward?"

But young Richards's thoughts were occupied with anything rather than himself.

"Miss Hammond," he presently burst forth, "they tell me you both sing and play. Now won't you lead the singing for us at the mission school? Some of the children have very good voices, and all they need is some one to start them off and lead them a little."

"I should like it very much," Marjorie said heartily. "Miss Forrester has been telling me about the school, and I should be glad to help."

Charley looked pleased. "But there would have to be rehearsals," he said, a little doubtfully.

"Oh, I should expect to have those, of course."

"And the children have to be managed, rather. They are an odd set, and don't put up with much faultfinding, at least until they are sure they like you."

"I don't know that I can promise not to find fault," Marjorie said merrily, "and I don't believe that I should care to humor them, but I'll try my best at least."

Willingness to help was a sure passport to young Richards's friendship, and the assurance that her powers were appreciated, an unfailing draft on Marjorie's good graces, so, when the little party returned, laden with wild-flowers, all were in the highest spirits. Effie, especially, was radiant with content that her new friend's merits were, at least, tacitly acknowledged by Marjorie the critical.

CHAPTER XI.

"NOT MY WAY."

Now that the Havensholme people had become familiar with the four girls, and, after the pleasant fashion of country folk, had adopted them into their community, and begun to discuss their doings as of those belonging to themselves, it seemed to them the natural and proper thing that "Miss Forrester's girls" should help the "Rector's boy" in his undertaking.

"A pretty job he has of it with that Dorley lot!" the old village ladies said, speaking of the mission scholars much as they might of unreclaimed savages. So, when Marjorie declared her intention of "going next Sunday between services to help with the singing," many were the expressions of half-friendly, half-compassionate interest bestowed upon her on the church steps, where much of the village

ceremonial, and no small portion of the village gossip, was interchanged.

"Well, I suppose you'll make out with it, somehow!" old Miss Piper said, in her wheezy, long-suffering tones. "Children 'most always do like music, even if they *air* only half human. But however Miss Rachel manages does beat me — puny little creatur' that she is!"

"I only wish I had her gift," Kate rejoined rather dolefully. "No, Miss Piper, I can't 'make out' at all, thank you. I just broke down shamefully the second Sunday I tried, and had to tell Mr. Richards that it wasn't my vocation. Children always do train with me!"

It was rather a sore point with poor Kate, for even little Effie managed to keep a class of the smallest Dorleyites quiet, staring in spellbound fascination at her spotless, doll-like prettiness, while she conscientiously labored to instil something of what she deemed "Sunday teaching" into their unreceptive little minds. It was mortifying, certainly; but, with Kate's round, laughing eyes and plump cheeks

before them, these same infants developed into the veriest sprites of saucy mischief, and she was compelled to give up the class in despair after a few fruitless trials.

Marjorie, anticipating no difficulty, whatever might be Kate's experience, followed Charles Richards into the crowded Sunday-school room, and advanced serenely to the parlor organ. The buzz-buzz which had filled the room at their entrance, together with some lawless pushing and scrambling for place among the larger, subsided at once, and the children greeted Charley with odd little ducks of the head and salutations, uncouth enough, but friendly nevertheless.

"There's a new teacher," was the comment bestowed on Marjorie. "My! ain't she a stunner with them big eyes, and the red feather in her hat! Tell yer, I mean to be in her class!"

But even the rough big boys subsided into temporary quiet, broken only by unfriendly nudges, when the young superintendent rang the bell, and opened the school with a brief and simple prayer that softened the lines of his rugged face into something

very like beauty. Then a hymn was read, and Marjorie, remembering Charley's injunction to "start" and "lead" his lawless forces, sang with all the strength of her fresh, clear young voice. She had considerable talent and a genuine love for the beautiful church music. So she put her whole heart into the notes she sang, and, as was evident after the first verse, put a soul into the untutored singers as well. The rough voices which had at first dropped promiscuously into the tune ceased to jar upon her ear; all eyes were turned earnestly upon her, and gradually the voices began to chime in harmoniously with hers. The chorus swelled as verse succeeded verse, and when the last was sung, the voices were in perfect harmony, and the singing as hearty as the young superintendent himself could have desired.

"Good!" he said to Marjorie, when he found time to slip behind her seat at the organ. "That's the way I wanted to make them sing, but we were all too unmusical to know how to manage it. Now that we have you, I shall hope that we may succeed

with Easter carols, and even with the musical parts of the service in time."

"Oh, yes," said Marjorie, with easy confidence and a pleased smile. Praise from any quarter was pleasant to her, and it was delightful to feel that she was capable of filling an important post, and being, in her way, as necessary to the undertaking as Richards himself.

So the rehearsals were taken up with all the ardor which Marjorie habitually bestowed on her enterprises, and her zeal could not be otherwise than delightful to Charles Richards. Kate sometimes looked a little dolorous when the frequent afternoon practice interfered with long-planned sketching expeditions, — but Marjorie's will was supreme with her two loyal cronies; and, besides, was it not an unanswerable argument that the mill children were only obtainable after working hours, — from six to seven o'clock, namely, just the golden hour of long blue shadows and softened lights that artists love?

At first all went smoothly. The children were fired by Marjorie's ardor and her sweet

voice, and full of delight at the discovery of their own voices. Although she certainly had not Miss Rachel's gentle tone with them, being a trifle imperious, much could be forgiven to such a fine, handsome young lady. Gradually, however, the rehearsals began to pall. The boys, among whom Marjorie had set her heart on forming a select choir, began to discover that their poor little playtime after mill-hours was sadly abridged by these frequent practisings, and to play truant accordingly, slipping into hiding-places known only to themselves when Marjorie appeared crossing the common, in front of the little church, on which they held their twilight games.

Marjorie was discomfited. Brilliant success, without hearty coöperation on the part of the boy-choir, was manifestly impossible. She reasoned with the offenders, promised rewards, and threatened punishments. Quite in vain; they promised amendment, but failed to keep the promise, and the rehearsals grew thinner and thinner.

One afternoon, as she was on her way to the Sunday-school room, she met Charles Richards, and at sight of him she brightened.

"I am so glad to meet you!" she said heartily. "Now, if you will cross the common with me, I think we may get more of the boys to come to the rehearsal."

"With all my heart," said Charles, turning back with her. "Are they beginning to fall off, then?"

"The boys are," said Marjorie, dejectedly, "and of course the music can't be so good."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said the good-natured fellow, easily; "I haven't noticed any great difference. They all sing heartily in school as if they enjoyed it."

"But that isn't the point," said Marjorie, knitting her brows. "I want them to sing *well*, and now that they are beginning to understand what I require of them, it is all-important that we should have full rehearsals."

"Yes, it is important, I know; but, after all, the main point is to have the children able to join in the music with interest when we meet on Sundays, and that, thanks to you, they are able to do. Their week-day time is cut sadly short at the best, poor fellows, and a half-hour more of breathing-space in

the pure air is a great matter to them, I fancy. Don't you think we should feel the same in their places?"

"I like to be thorough in what I undertake," Marjorie replied, the cloud still resting on her brow, and Charles did not speak again until they had reached the common.

"Ah, they are out in full force to-night!" he said, as they came in sight of the jacketless lads, pale and pinched for want of fresh air, but just now running, leaping, and shouting as if their lungs were not habitually half choked with dust and cotton fibres. At sight of the pair, a few of the more agile took to their heels at once, and vanished from the scene.

"You see!" said Marjorie, gloomily. Charley laughed.

"It is such a lovely evening, you know," he said, indulgently. "Now, boys, here is Miss Hammond come to sing and play for you. Who is going to practise with her?"

A few started forward, but the majority, and among them the coveted best voices, hung back.

"She keeps us in too long," said one thin, freckle-faced youth, sullenly.

"Oh, she doesn't want to do that, I'm sure," said Charley, genially. "She only comes to give us all pleasure, you know, because you like to sing better on Sundays, and we like to hear how much better you can sing!"

"Yes, we knows that," said one little fellow, "and we likes to hear her play the hand-organ for us. But, if we don't sing jist right, she gits mad with us, she do, and keeps us in a plaguy sight too long!"

Marjorie's face flushed crimson, as Charley gave her a comical look of apology and amusement combined.

"Oh, come now, Terence," he said, in his easy tones; "I'm sure you are mistaken. Young ladies don't 'get mad,' as you say, and Miss Marjorie takes so much pains to please you that you ought to be willing to take a little to please her, eh? Besides, you like to sing, you know, Jim Allen."

This was said to the sullen, freckle-faced boy, who, as it happened, possessed a voice

of melting sweetness, and was the flower of Marjorie's prospective choir.

"We like to play a darned sight better," said Jim, bluntly.

"But you're going in to-night for all that, I know," said Charley, kindly.

The boy hesitated a moment. "Seein' it's you," he said, softening as the long hand was laid on his shoulder; "but I don't do it for *she*, mind ye, and I'm comin' out in half an hour, sharp!"

The other boys followed their leader with more or less good will, and Richards, unlocking the door, lingered a moment to say to Marjorie, while the roughly shod flock clattered up the uncarpeted stairs, "We'll manage it in some way without so much practice for the future. It *is* hard to dock off their playtime these lovely summer nights."

Marjorie shook her head with a very determined air, though she made no reply; and as Charley crossed the common the sweet high notes of the boyish voices reached his ears in seemingly seraphic harmony.

An hour later, returning the same way,

he stopped at the Sunday-school room, seeing the window open, though there was no sound of voices from within. To his surprise, the door was locked.

"I suppose they forgot to shut the window, but I'll stop and tell the sexton."

Just as he was turning to cross the green, a voice from the open window called him.

"Mr. Richards! have you the key? Please let me out!"

"The key? No, I haven't it. But how came you to be locked in?"

"Hush!" replied Marjorie, in a tone between laughing and crying. "I can't explain at the top of my voice. Hasn't the sexton a duplicate key?"

"I'll go for it," and Charley sped off, much perplexed, and auguring mischief. Returning as quickly as possible, he found Marjorie pacing the floor, her face flushed with anger and mortification.

"But how did it happen?" cried the good fellow, breathless with his haste.

"Oh, it is a very short story. Jim Allen came, determined to make all the trouble

he could, and did not sing a note properly. So, when the half-hour was over, and I let the others go, I told him he must stay. That was perfectly just, of course, as it was not because he could not, but because he would not sing."

She looked at Richard as if expecting a reply.

"Yes, it was *just*, of course," he answered hesitatingly, "though I think —"

"He flatly refused to stay," Marjorie went on rapidly, "and spoke very impertinently to me. That made me all the more determined. The others went downstairs, and I was just beginning to play for Jim when he caught sight of the key lying half under my hat on the organ, and, before I had time to turn, he had seized it, and rushed downstairs. I heard him shut and lock the door behind him. Then I went to the window, and saw him rushing across the common with such an impudent grimace over his shoulder at me!"

Charles Richards's face had grown more and more chagrined as she went on with her story.

"Oh, that was very bad!" he murmured. "I am so heartily sorry it should have happened."

"Sorry!" echoed Marjorie. "*Angry*, you mean! I don't think it is a case for sorrow."

She tapped her foot impatiently on the floor, looking at Richards's rueful face, almost as if to include him in the righteous wrath which she felt herself justified in harboring toward the culprit.

"No, sorry," he repeated; "sorry that you should have been so shamefully treated by one of our boys, — and Jim is by no means a bad fellow at heart, — sorry that you should have had such a return for all your kindness, and more than sorry that we must lose you."

"Oh, you won't lose me," said Marjorie, loftily. "I never give up what I have undertaken because it is hard, I assure you. Of course I shall expect Jim Allen to apologize to me, and of course you will wish it too?"

"Yes, surely," said Richards, gravely; but his face did not lose its preoccupied, rather troubled, expression, and Marjorie looked at

him inquiringly as he still remained standing somewhat irresolutely by the organ.

"You know I told you," he said at last, hesitatingly, "that these children were peculiar and needed managing. I find — you're sure you won't be offended if I speak plainly?" He looked earnestly at her out of his frank blue eyes.

"Oh, no," said Marjorie, feeling, indeed, that that would be impossible.

"I find, then," he went on quickly, "that, in order to effect anything with these children, one must lose sight of everything except the real end we have in view, which is to get a little closer to them, to win them to us, and so make an opportunity of doing them real good."

"That is exactly what I was determined to do," said Marjorie, triumphantly, too much occupied with her point to pay very close heed to the purport of Richards's words. "I was determined that nothing should interfere with their learning to sing properly."

"Ah, but you see —" hesitated Richards, "that isn't what I mean, exactly. That's

a good end, certainly, but it isn't the main point, after all. You see, Miss Hammond," —he walked up and down the room, his hands behind him, his eyes on the ground, his features working in his earnestness; "if one is to reach these poor hardened little ragamuffins, it can only be by melting them, not by hammering at them. I call *opening their hearts* the real end, and lose sight of all other objects if I can keep hold of that. I don't try to set out with any definite aim of success, — personal success, I mean, — and I shift my ground with them fifty times if only I can gain their affection."

"I see," said Marjorie, rather coldly.

"They are very far from being bad fellows," he went on eagerly; "why, think what any one of us might be in their places! I put that always before me, and then any little response we may win from them through gentleness and sympathy seems a far greater achievement than the most perfect singing, don't you see?"

He looked at her rather anxiously still, as if afraid he had said too much.

Marjorie flushed a little. "I understand

your way," she said. "It is not easy for me to do so, but I'll try."

"Thank you," said Richards, heartily, and the two crossed the green, side by side, in silence.

The key made its way mysteriously into the sexton's open window that same evening; and the apology which Marjorie had demanded followed in due course the next Sunday.

"I'm sorry I locked you in, miss, and I'll never sass you no more," Jim repeated stolidly, much like a wooden automaton, marching up to the organ to deliver himself of the speech before school began; then he added rapidly, *sotto voce*, "I said that 'cos I told *him* I would," with a jerk of his thumb toward Richards's desk, "but I'm not a-goin' to stay in singin' any night more'n half an hour. You bet!"

"I do not want you or any one else to come at all, unless you like to, Jim," Marjorie replied pleasantly, and the freckle-faced youth retired, staring with surprise at so unexpected a reception of his intended defiance.

Though Marjorie's conscience told her that Richards was right, and she would not therefore persist in her own plan with the unruly Dorleyites, her pride had been cruelly wounded. She had not meant to have a contest of wills with the little imps, but to be brilliantly successful in managing them, and to have her helpfulness acknowledged and commended. Her joy in her work was gone.

"I wonder why Rachel succeeds so much better with that boy than I do!" she said to herself, as, from her seat at the organ, she watched her friend's class, of which Jim Allen had once been the black sheep. "He certainly seems one of the best-behaved boys in school with her. O dear! I did think I was going to do some good, and now it will be all uphill work!"

CHAPTER XII

MORE OF MARJORIE'S POLICY.

THE Rectory was a pleasant old-fashioned mansion standing at the other end of the village from the deserted estate of Woodlands. It was a large, square, brick house with wide-spreading elms in front, shading the porch, with its settees and the quaint brass-knockered door. "Quite roomy enough for a man with a large family," the Rector said, but instead of this visionary flock, no one lived in it except himself, his cheery, motherly wife, and their only son. The four girls soon fell into the habit of stopping there as they passed the house, sure of a welcome from the Rector, a kindly, easy-tempered man who dearly loved young people. Marjorie was his favorite, for, having more confidence than the others, and far greater conversational powers, she had

a bright, easy way of chatting with him, which completely won his heart.

"I wish we had a daughter just like her!" he said to his wife, "so full of life and energy, so eager to be helpful, and with such a pretty way of helping!"

"Yes, Marjorie can be very winning; but I think that sort of girl is usually subject to moods. If I had my choice of a daughter, I would rather have Rachel; she is the same in all weathers."

"Dear me, Martha!" said the Rector, with twinkling eyes. "One would suppose we were the most match-making couple in Havensholme! I doubt whether Charley will commission either you or me to choose a daughter-in-law to suit our individual fancy."

"Why, Dr. Richards! I wasn't thinking in the least of Charley or daughters-in-law, you know very well."

"Neither was I, my dear," said the Rector, sobering, "only saying that of these four very pleasant young people, Marjorie was my favorite."

That afternoon Marjorie and Rachel hap-

pened to stop at the Rectory, on their way home from a walk, and found Dr. Richards just starting off in response to an urgent summons from an old parishioner who had moved away from the village.

"I fear I must leave old Jack off my list for to-day," he said hurriedly to his wife, as he smilingly greeted the two girls, "unless you can find time for him, Martha."

"I'm afraid not, but probably Charley will."

"What is it, Mrs. Richards?" Marjorie asked eagerly. "Do tell us if it is anything that we can do; Rachel and I will go if it is to read to anybody."

"Yes, it is to read to old John Tarbox," said the Rector. "You know him, the poor blind, rheumatic old salt, who lives down among the fishing-houses? Yes, go, both of you, if you like. It will do the poor old fellow good to hear two fresh young voices!"

"They won't find it very pleasant work, I fear," said Mrs. Richards. "The poor old man is very cross-grained, and hates anything new or unexpected, so their com-

ing in your place will be a disappointment. I think as you can't go, Doctor, Charley had better find time."

"Do let us try, Dr. Richards!" Marjorie exclaimed. "Your son is busy, and I have often been with my cousin Rosamond to visit poor people at home."

"Of course you shall go, if you wish, my dear," said the Rector, hurrying away, "but mind you tell the old man why I did not come."

Rachel said nothing, except to ask a question or two about old Jack and his wife, and the two girls set out at once. They had hardly reached the gate, however, when Mrs. Richards called them back to give them a little package.

"It is tobacco for the poor old soul," she said, smiling. "Dr. Richards often carries him some, for his pipe is almost the only comfort he has left now, and, when he is smoking, his good old wife has a little peace. You need not give it to him unless he should ask for it."

The two girls had often seen old Tarbox, for, in the course of their rambles with

Miss Forrester about Havensholme, they had spent many an afternoon on the long pier, from which there was a glorious view of the open sea. Kate delighted to sketch there, and Grace, who knew all the old seafaring men, had more than once persuaded a weather-beaten old tar to sit for his portrait. These old fellows gathered on the pier every sunny afternoon, pipe in mouth, to sit at the door of a deserted fish-house, and tell long yarns of bygone days, some of which our girls had heard. They had never had any talk with Tarbox, whose many infirmities made him rather crabbed; but his cheery old wife was a special favorite of Grace's, and they had often been to the cottage.

It was a tiny little whitewashed abode, very neat and snug with its two rooms and sanded floors, and was set down among the fishing-houses so close to the water that it seemed almost like being at sea. An awning, made of an old sail, was rigged on one side of the house, and here Tarbox usually sat, busy with the nets which he could make without eyesight.

The girls found his wife bustling about indoors, and explained their errand.

"Why, deary me! John ought to be right pleased to have two young ladies come to read to him," Mrs. Tarbox said, in her high, cheery tones; then added, in a lower key, "He's just a bit crooked to-day, my old man is, and he thinks a deal of the Rector's coming, so he'll seem put out at first, maybe, when he finds he ain't come, but don't you mind him! He don't mean nothin' by it."

Then, putting her head out of the window which opened toward the water, she said, in coaxing tones, "Now, John, here's two young ladies from the Rectory come to read to you. You'll be glad to hear 'em, wont you?"

"Not I," said the uncompromising John, surlily. "There ain't no young ladies at the Rectory that I knows on, and I wouldn't want 'em if there was. What I want to know is, where's the doctor?"

"Dr. Richards was very sorry," said Marjorie, putting her head also out of the window. "But he was called away, unexpectedly, to a sick man, and he told us

we might come, instead, and read to you, if you would like it."

This reply Tarbox received with a simple "Humph!" and went on with his net. Marjorie and Rachel exchanged a glance of discomfiture.

"Oh, come now, John!" said his wife, persuasively. "You know you're always pleased to hear the newspaper, and it's right kind of these young ladies to come and read it to you."

This being undeniable, old John rose stiffly, with some show of reluctance, and came slowly indoors, feeling his way.

"There's a pile of papers yonder that Mr. Charles left," he said indifferently. "You might read them if you've got a mind to."

"Is that what the Rector reads?" Marjorie said in a half-whisper to Mrs. Tarbox, forgetting that the hearing of a blind person is usually acute.

"He mostly reads the Bible," the old woman replied; "but, at odd times, he or Mr. Charles reads my old man the news. I ain't much of a hand at it myself, let

alone havin' small time for it. John does love a bit of news."

"What the Rector reads ain't neither here nor there," Tarbox interrupted, testily; "he and Mr. Charles is one thing, and these two's another. The papers is what I've come to hear from *them*."

"Oh, just as you like," said Marjorie. "What do you wish to hear read, Mr. Tarbox?"

"Shippin' news," said the old man, laconically. "Why don't the other one speak a bit?" Rachel laughed outright, a pretty little amused laugh.

"Why, there hasn't been anything for me to say, so far," she said merrily. "I think you will like Miss Hammond's reading better than mine."

"Very like," said Tarbox, trying to speak in the same gruff tone as before, though the corners of his grim mouth relaxed a little. "I did think Mr. Charles 'd have come round to-day if the doctor didn't."

"He is very busy," Marjorie replied, in what she intended to be a reproving tone. "Shall I begin, Mr. Tarbox?"

"I'm all ready," said the old fellow, brusquely. He sighed as he spoke, and observant Rachel noticed that he fingered the stem of his empty pipe, which protruded from the pocket of his blue jacket.

Marjorie, however, quite absorbed in the matter she had in hand, began forthwith, choosing the pieces of intelligence that she fancied would interest Tarbox, and reading in a clear, pleasant tone, which, as she had more than once been told, made her reading very enjoyable.

Tarbox appeared to be listening, though an occasional "Humph!" or muttered "Ay, ay!" were rather equivocal signs of appreciation. Presently, however, as she paused and looked up, expecting some token of satisfaction, old John leaned forward toward Rachel, and said, in a gruff, confidential undertone, "Say, Miss, the doctor didn't send along a little bundle of 'baccy, did he, now?"

"Why, John!" cried his wife, with uplifted hands, "just to think of your asking the young lady such a thing! He thinks a sight of his pipe, Miss," she added

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apologetically, "and the Rector's so good to him. Of course he didn't send no such a thing by the young ladies, John."

"Oh, yes, he did," said Rachel, brightly, producing the package, which she put in the blind man's hard, knotty hand, "or Mrs. Richards did, rather. She said the Rector promised it to you."

Old Tarbox was visibly gratified. He sat a moment with softened expression, fingering the package, while Marjorie remained silent, feeling somewhat as if the words had been taken out of her mouth.

"Do you care for any more reading, Mr. Tarbox?" she asked presently.

"After a bit, p'raps," the old fellow replied, "though I could tell a better yarn than any of those 'longshore chaps, if I pleased."

"Do you mean sea stories?" asked Rachel, in her gentle, pleasant tone. "Do, Mr. Tarbox! We should like so much to hear them, shouldn't we, Marjorie?"

"Oh, yes," said Marjorie, folding up the newspaper, with the air of one who feels that the cause is lost. "I think Mr. Tar-

box will find talking a great deal more interesting than listening, and we shall be glad to listen."

"Just sit here then with Betty a bit," said old John, quite eagerly, "whilst I smoke a pipe outside, and then I'll tell you a yarn."

The mild old wife shook her head deprecatingly at her contrary spouse, as he shuffled out to his seat under the awning, but Rachel smiled reassuringly, and even Marjorie could not deny an interest in the story when it was told.

"But that was not what we came for, Rachel," she said, after they had taken leave of the old man, who was much less crusty after the pipe and the yarn-spinning; "that wasn't in the least what we came for, you know."

"Not what we expected, of course; but, do you know, Marjorie, I think it did just as well, after all!"

"I suppose old John liked it better," said Marjorie, inflexibly, "but it certainly was not what the Rector expected of us."

"I don't believe he expected us to take

his place; do you?" said Rachel, with a little twinkle of fun in her eyes.

Marjorie laughed good-naturedly, saying, as she threw one arm caressingly round Rachel's shoulder, "You always get on so much better with people than I, Ray! I wonder what the reason is."

"How did you young ladies succeed with old Tarbox?" Dr. Richards asked when he next saw the two girls.

Marjorie's face fell. "Not at all well. He did not care in the least for the reading, or anything but the tobacco."

The Rector threw back his head and laughed. "Indeed! What an old reprobate! What is your version of the matter, Miss Rachel?"

"I don't think he cared to have us come instead of you," said Rachel, shyly, "but he enjoyed having us listen to his stories, so I thought it turned out pretty successfully after all. I suppose the most important thing for us to do was to please him, wasn't it?"

"That I couldn't decide without hearing the whole story," said the Rector, affecting

a grave judicial air. Marjorie accordingly gave a lively account of the interview, with a capital imitation of old John's surly tone.

The Rector laughed loud and long, pronouncing his verdict finally to be "an unqualified success," and Marjorie's dissatisfaction was somewhat soothed by his reception of her story. There were no further offers, however, of visiting at the Tarbox cottage.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BREAKNECK GALLOP.

"MISS GRACE, do you care if we go out riding on horseback with Clifford sometime?"

Marjorie gave a glance across the room, as she asked the question, to make sure that Rachel heard her.

"Why, my approval would depend very much on circumstances," Grace replied. "It is vacation now, so the old embargo no longer exists. But I should wish to be sure of the riders and very sure of the horses before I gave my consent."

"Oh, of course," said Marjorie, "but I rode a good deal with Mr. Lea while I was at Newport, and Clifford says there are excellent horses at Topley's."

"Very well; in that case you will probably be able to have your ride." And

no more was said at the time on the subject.

Clifford and George Stanton were still at Exton, "coaching" with Charles Richards.

As the Forresters' was a convenient stopping-place, in the walks to and from the Rectory, Marjorie saw her cousin almost daily. He happened to be there one August morning when the girls were sitting rather languidly on the piazza, finding the sultry air not conducive to doing anything with vigor.

"Ah!" said Grace, looking up from a letter she was reading, with a bright, pleased look, "I have a treat for Rachel. You would like to see your mother, wouldn't you?"

"Oh!" cried Rachel, as the pink flush mounted in her cheeks, — "if I could!"

"And you can," said Grace, smiling. "Mother and I are asked to spend a long day with an old friend to-morrow. It is some miles from here, and, as your mother is within possible driving distance from our friend's house, I propose to take you with us, and leave you with her."

"Oh!" cried Rachel again, clasping her hands in delight; "but wouldn't it shorten your day too much to be driving me about?"

"I propose," said Grace, with a smiling glance at Marjorie, "to make it a day and a night if I were allowed."

"Of course," said Marjorie, brightly. "You'll leave me in charge, I suppose, and none of us will be afraid with Mehitable and Job in the house. What do you say, girls?"

"Oh, do go, dear Miss Grace!"

"We'll do just as Marjorie says, won't we?" came in one breath from Kate and Effie.

Grace laughed.

"Miss Forrester thinks 'Marjorie' the ringleader in mischief, I believe," said that young woman, merrily. "But I hope you'll go all the same, Miss Grace. I'm sure you may trust me."

"I'm sure I do," said Grace, heartily, and the drooping spirits all revived from the dogday influence, as spirits are apt to, be the possessors old or young, at the prospect of anything new.

"What a famous chance for us!" said Cliff, but Marjorie did not, at the moment, catch his meaning.

Next morning, however, as the carriage disappeared down the avenue, and the three girls, who had stood on the steps waving their handkerchiefs, turned to each other with a "What next?" expression on their faces, Clifford appeared on his morning walk to the Rectory.

"Marjorie!" he cried, as soon as he was within speaking distance. "What do you say to a ride this afternoon? I can have the horses if you say the word."

"Why,—I don't know—" said Marjorie, slowly, turning toward the other girls; "how would you like to go for a horseback ride this afternoon with Cliff and George Stanton?"

Kate's round eyes looked very dubious, and Effie responded with much less than her usual alacrity.

"I think it might be very nice, perhaps—some day when Miss Forrester is at home."

"Why, child, you need not wait for that

if you care to go," Marjorie exclaimed. "I spoke to Miss Forrester about it myself the other day, and she said she thought we might go."

"Oh, did she?" said Effie. "All right, then."

"What do you say, Kate?" said Marjorie, somewhat impatiently, for she was vexed at such a lamentable lack of spirit on the part of her followers.

"Oh, *I'm* not going," replied Kate, with decision. "I don't know how to ride, and I always do get into scrapes everywhere, you know. I'd rather go sketching with Mr. Richards, if it's all the same to you."

Effie again looked inclined to waver, so Marjorie hastened to the rescue.

"You have your habit here, you know, and certainly *you* know how to ride, for you go nearly every day at home."

"Yes, but that's only on Snowflake," said Effie, "and besides, I always ride with papa or Frank."

"And here you'll ride with Stanton and me," said Clifford, "to say nothing of Marjorie. As for the horse, I'll answer for

your having a safe one. Don't break up the party, Miss Effie!"

"Oh, I should be very sorry to do that," said little Effie. "Yes, I'll go with pleasure, Mr. Dexter."

"At four o'clock, then, Cliff," said Marjorie brightening, as she laid her hand caressingly on her little friend's shoulder. "We'll be ready for you."

"And you're sure Miss Forrester will think it all right?" Effie said, as Cliff strode down the avenue.

"Why, child, didn't I tell you what she said? I'm sure if Miss Forrester trusts me you may, Effie!"

This effectually drove the clouds from Effie's brow, and she and Kate forthwith devoted themselves with light hearts to the compounding of chocolate custards for dinner.

Four o'clock found the two girls standing ready dressed on the steps.

"Oh, Kate, you are a being of one idea!" cried Marjorie, as her friend came downstairs, prepared for her trudge a-field with the familiar camp-stool, color-box, and white umbrella.

"I know it," said Kate, in her honest, shamefaced fashion. "I am just so stupid, Marjorie! I don't seem to have any idea in my head except for 'making daubs,' as mother used to say. I don't know how you girls have patience to put up with me!"

"Why, you dear old Kate!" cried Marjorie, kissing her, "did you think I was in earnest? Some day you'll be a real artist, and we shall all hide our diminished heads before you. It will be the 'one idea' that did it, Kate!"

Kate returned the kiss heartily, with a little dimness in her bright, merry eyes, and Marjorie, standing on the piazza steps, felt, as she watched her friend out of sight, an odd twinge of conscience. Through her mind echoed, as lines of poetry sometimes will, a bit of Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty":

> "I, loving freedom, and untried;
> No sport of every random gust,
> Yet being to myself a guide,
> Too blindly have reposed my trust—"

The clatter of the horses' hoofs, as they turned into the avenue, gave a welcome

diversion to her thoughts, and, with an exclamation of delight, she sprang down the steps.

The horses ridden by the two boys were ordinary stable-hacks, but of the two side-saddle horses which they led, one was a glossy, spirited bay, and the other a pretty, gentle-looking, white horse.

"Now, young ladies!" cried Clifford, gayly, "take your choice — beauty carries the day. Both have excellent reputations: 'no kickin', no shyin', no tricks, no nothin',' as my friend Bill Stableman says."

"Choose, Effie," said Marjorie.

"Then I'll take the white one," said Effie, "because she reminds me of Snowflake."

The bay was exactly to Marjorie's mind, and two minutes later the whole merry party cantered out of the yard, Marjorie in advance with Stanton, Effie following with Cliff.

Mehitable stood on the stoop outside her kitchen, shading her eyes with her hand and watching the four till they disappeared in the dust raised by their horses' hoofs.

"Now I'd jes' like to know," she said, apostrophizing her flat-iron, "ef Miss Grace gave them girls leave to go gallopin' 'cross country with them two fellers! 'Tain't none of my business, of course, but it doos seem to me amazin' like mice playin' jes' so soon as the cat's back is turned!"

She paused a moment to test a fresh iron, then thud! thud! the heavy hand descended, and all Mehitable's surplus energies were concentrated on the sheet she was ironing, while the four riders were speedily forgotten.

Could anything have been more delightful for a horseback ride than the little piney wood-lanes in which Havensholme abounded? Narrow and winding, overhung above with cool green boughs, carpeted beneath with an elastic brown carpet of pine-needles, breathing out soft balmy odors where the sunbeams slanted down through the trees, with peeps of velvet moss and nodding ferns on either side of the road, and fresh carols of wood-birds overhead — oh, could anything have been more delightful than this wood-gallop? Effie lost her

secret fears as the white horse developed a most easy canter, her lovely little rose-tinted face wreathed itself in smiles, and she gave herself up freely to the enjoyment of Cliff's merry speeches; while Marjorie's spirits rose to the ecstatic pitch, and nothing less than a gay little hunting-song, carolled out in a voice as fresh as that of the wood-birds overhead, could express the fulness of her joy.

"I envy you your lungs, Miss Marjorie," said Stanton. "The jolt, jolt of this brute of mine is quite enough to put me out of breath without joining in your chorus!"

"I'm afraid he *is* hard," said Marjorie, slackening her speed and looking at Stanton's panting horse with amused disfavor. "Now mine has the most exhilarating trot, and yet he is as easy as a rocking-chair! Cliff, why didn't you get better horses for Mr. Stanton and yourself? You seem to have expended all your powers of selection on horses for Effie and me."

"Of course I did," said Cliff, gallantly, "and as there was little or nothing left, George and I put up with the best we

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could find. We don't mind, if you're suited."

"All right, then. But if we should come to running races, Effie and I should leave you hopelessly behind."

"Oh, that's no part of the programme," said Cliff.

It is not my purpose to describe all the particulars of that charming ride: how they trotted down one little wood-path, and lazily paced up another, visited a waterfall in the depths of the wood, known only to the two schoolboys; how they rested on the mossy banks of the little brook, babbling through the woods below the fall; how finally, with a dawning recollection of Mehitable's waffles, and the tea-table, at which the boys were to be guests, they emerged from the woods on the open road, and turned their horses' heads homewards.

"How delightful it has been!" cried Marjorie. "A vote of thanks to you, Cliff. But why shouldn't we go back the same way?"

"Too long by half. George and I must take the horses back, and What-do-you-call-

her — that grim cook of yours — will have supper waiting and the griddle-cakes all spoiled if we don't hurry. This way is pretty enough."

"I wish the railroad didn't run along the side, though!" said Effie. "It always frightens me when the trains pass, even when I am driving with Miss Forrester and her steady old pony."

"No danger," said Cliff, reassuringly. "Your horse doesn't shy, nor kick, nor nothin', you know! Lead on, George," and the four trotted gayly along, though the poorer steeds began to look somewhat jaded.

The railroad, after the fashion of some country places, ran for quite a distance along the roadside, separated from it only by a narrow belt of grass and bushes, and even the sober roadsters were apt to start a little when the heavy trains came rolling along with no gentler warning than a shrill screech.

"It is rather a bad place for skittish horses," George Stanton said to Marjorie. "There was a wooden paling once, but it

got burned up by sparks from the locomotives, and the town authorities have never found the requisite energy to put it up again. They're waiting for an accident to happen first."

"But all the Havensholme horses must be used to it by this time," said Marjorie.

"And you think that the strangers don't matter? Ah, I'm afraid you're not much of a Good Samaritan, Miss Hammond! However, if we're only to think of Number One, I'll lay any wager on the nerves of this Rip Van Winkle of mine!"

Who-o-op! A terrific whistle, prolonged beyond all reason, drowned Stanton's words, and a long train came thundering round the curve in the road, clattering heavily over the sleepers, and strewing the grass and bushes with cinders.

Marjorie's horse gave a startled plunge, then yielded to the firm hand of his rider, reassured, also, by the sight of the retreating locomotive. "Rip Van Winkle" and his fellow-roadster had long since learned to disdain car-whistles, but poor little Effie! With a snort of affright, the "gentle-look-

ing" white horse rose on her hind legs, her rider clinging in desperation to the pommel; then, eluding Clifford's frantic grasp at the bridle, the creature tore away, mad with terror, bounded over the low stone wall on the other side of the road, and rushed wildly up the wooded slope forming part of the Rolfes' place. That Effie was still in the saddle, clinging with both arms to the horse's neck, was all that the terrified trio saw.

"The avenue! the avenue, Marjorie!" cried Cliff, as Marjorie, without a moment's hesitation, was urging her horse over the wall. "We may be in time to head her off before she is thrown!" and Marjorie, lashing her horse, dashed off full gallop for the gateway. Clifford and George did their best to follow at the same pace, but it was hopeless: their poor jaded hacks could not be urged up the long hill at any speed greater than a halting trot.

Meantime Marjorie, in an agony of apprehension, dashed up the hill and through the gate-posts, not knowing exactly what she hoped to do for Effie's rescue, but with

a conscience-stricken determination to do something. Galloping blindly along the avenue, she had very nearly run down a horseman, who was riding toward her at a very different pace. "Take care where you're going!" he exclaimed, somewhat sharply; then, catching sight of the girl's pale, terror-stricken face, he wheeled his horse directly, and galloped beside her. "Has any accident happened? Can I help you?" And Marjorie, looking up, saw, without noticing, as we do see at such moments of supreme excitement, that the horseman had the quick blue eyes and fair complexion, though now coated with tan and sunburn, of the little photograph on Grace's wall. "Oh, thank you!" she panted; "if you could stop Effie's horse! She was frightened by the cars and dashed over the stone wall at the foot of the hill. There! there she is!" and she pointed to the next field, where the frightened horse was dashing through the tall grass, Effie still clinging to her neck, but swaying pitifully in the loosened saddle. The young man had taken the intervening stone wall

at a leap, and Marjorie's horse, excited to emulation, followed closely. There was an intensely harrowing moment when all three went dashing over the grassy slope, then the white horse made a plunge at a five-barred gate, missed it, and fell heavily on her side. Mr. Rolfe was out of his saddle in a second, Marjorie, white as a sheet, at his elbow.

"Is Effie dead?" she asked, with trembling lips, not daring to look. The young man lifted the little figure, which had been thrown some distance from the falling horse, Effie's foot having, fortunately, become disengaged from the stirrup in her mad gallop. Gently as he raised her, the pain was more than she could bear, and, with a groan, the poor child fainted away in his arms.

"No, not dead, thank Heaven!" said the young man, laying the drooping head tenderly on his shoulder. "But I think that her ankle is broken. She fell with her foot doubled under her."

Marjorie wrung her hands. "Oh, then she will be lame too!" she cried, wildly. "What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Don't be distressed," Rolfe said, kindly, surprised at such an outbreak from the girl-rider who had leaped the stone wall so gallantly, and shown so much coolness and courage. "It may not be so bad as we think. I will take you both to my house. If you are not afraid to mount, get on your horse again, and lead the hurt one. I can carry your friend, and lead my horse. It is only a little way."

But at this juncture the two boys appeared, their horses flecked with foam and dust, and poor Marjorie's strained nerves had time to recover from the shock, while Clifford told the story, and she walked her horse slowly along by Kenelm Rolfe's side, her eyes fixed in mute distress on Effie's white face.

"Now, don't cry!" the young man said again, in his kindly, boyish fashion. "Come! you are such a brave girl, and took those fences so pluckily! Your friend shall have the best care, I promise you; my housekeeper is a capital nurse, and I will go for the doctor at once. So don't cry, please! But you have not told me where you live.

Perhaps you would like to let your friends know your whereabouts?"

"They are spending the summer at Mrs. Forrester's," Cliff replied, "and we are from Phelps Academy."

The young man started, and the color rushed into his sunburned face.

"In that case, your friends will be able to come to you," he said, with some constraint, "for of course this poor little thing cannot be moved at present. Will one of you boys let them know at the Forresters' about the accident, and ask them most earnestly from me — from Kenelm Rolfe — to come to Woodlands at once, and make it their home as long as they will?"

"But they are not coming back until to-morrow!" Marjorie exclaimed. "We should not have gone on horseback — it was all my fault that we did! And poor Kate! She will be so terrified when we do not come!"

"My dear girl," said Mr. Rolfe, laying his little burden carefully on a couch in the room into which Marjorie had mechanically followed him, "just let me ar-

range everything for you. Do you stay here with your Effie and Mrs. Dennison while I go for the doctor. Then when you are a little calmed down, and your friend is more comfortable, you shall ride over to the Forresters' with the boys if you choose, and reassure Kate. Will that do?"

He looked at her so kindly and playfully with his bright blue eyes that Marjorie burst into a half-hysterical laugh, and dropped at once into a chair beside Effie, over whom the portly old housekeeper was now busied, with many exclamations of pitying tenderness.

"There, there!" said the young man, patting the overwrought girl's shoulder, "you're quite used up; and no wonder! But it will all be right, you'll see. Your fault? Not a bit of it! And do you know I'm almost glad that Mrs. Forrester and Gr— and Miss Forrester are away for the night, for now we can arrange so much more comfortably for their coming here. Nothing could have happened more opportunely. So now I'm off for the doctor."

To an older person, with Marjorie's foreknowledge, there might have seemed some unnatural excitement in Kenelm Rolfe's quickened movements and dancing eyes, but the girl only noted gratefully how bright his smile was, and how hopefully he spoke, taking courage therefrom for Effie.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

KATE and Charley Richards had returned from their sketching expedition, and, sitting placidly on the steps in the fast-falling twilight, were awaiting the return of the riders. Mehitable, at short intervals, appeared in the open doorway behind them like the genius of unrest, her face fiery red from the ironing-board and the waffles, and receiving each time a negative answer to her breathless inquiry, "*Be* they come *yit?*" disappeared again with a muttered, "Well, I never!"

"I'm sure you might be an artist if you chose," Kate was saying.

Richards shook his head with a half-smile. "No, that would take the whole of a man for half a lifetime, and I couldn't give all my mind to that."

"Oh, how can you help it," cried Kate. "What can prevent you?"

"Only something else that I'd rather do, to be sure." Then, as Kate looked at him incredulously, "I hope some day to study for the ministry."

"Oh! and would *that* really interest you more? I mean" — trying to soften the bald frankness of her amazement, — "it is a very noble calling, of course; but, if I had gifts like yours, I could never think of devoting my life to anything else!"

"And you have quite equal gifts," said Richards, warmly, "besides having the single aim and the perseverance that will make the most of them. Now with me it is different: if I make up my mind to devote my life to art, dearly as I love it, I am sure I should see faces looking at me from the canvas, and hear voices calling in my ear."

"How strange!" said Kate. "I suppose it is because I am such a very unhelpful person," she added, regretfully, "but I never miss people, or think of anything that I might be doing for them while I am paint-

ing. You know, Mr. Richards, how it was in the Mission school — I always manage just so badly!"

"Yes," said Charley, laughing, "we all have our vocation, no doubt, and you are right to stick to your palette, Miss Kate. But, by the way, do you think that Miss Marjorie finds the school music a grievous burden since she has discovered that our children will never practise enough to fulfil her hopes?"

"I'm sure I don't know. Marjorie would never tell us if she felt discouraged about anything she had undertaken. She has so much more determination than I have — what, don't you think so?" her round eyes opening wider still at the shade of doubt expressed in Richards' face.

"Oh, I wasn't making comparisons, unless between Miss Marjorie when she was carrying out her schemes successfully, and Miss Marjorie when she had to shape her ends to necessity. She certainly has a great deal of determination."

"Hasn't she?" Kate rejoined, heartily. "We girls all depend upon her so. Mar-

jorie is always so sure whether a thing is right or not. She never has to hesitate and make up her mind, as Effie and I do. She is always so ready to take the responsibility of a thing, too, and even Rachel does not like to do that—"

"There they air at last!" interrupted Mehitable behind them. "I hope to goodness' sakes they've had enough of it!" And the four horses came slowly into the yard, Clifford leading the white one with the empty side-saddle.

"Have you had a good time?" cried Kate cheerily, "why—why, where's Effie?"

"Oh, Kate!" exclaimed Marjorie, showing her pale, tear-stained face to the startled eyes of her friend. "Effie has been thrown from her horse and has broken her ankle! She is at Woodlands, and I am to go back to her. And oh, Kate! if she *should* be lamed for life, it is my fault, for I ought not to have gone horseback riding without asking Miss Forrester's leave!"

"Effie—Woodlands—your fault—why, you did ask her! What do you mean, Marjorie?" cried the bewildered Kate.

"That's jest eggsactly what I says to myself this blessed afternoon," Mehitable broke in triumphantly. "I says to myself, says I, 'Now there's them girls goin' off jest as soon as ever Miss Grace's back is turned, and ef mischief doesn't come of it, my name ain't Mehitable Plummer! You'd oughter be ashamed of yourself, Marjorie Hammond, ef that poor little mite is hurt, for ef you told her to cut off her finger, it's my belief she'd jedge it her duty to do it."

"Mehitable, you're just abominable!" cried Kate, excited to polysyllabic wrath by Marjorie's woebegone face.

"No, Kate, it's just the truth," said Marjorie, so meekly that her warm-hearted friend was melted to tears. "She is right, and I deserve anything she can say. Miss Forrester did tell me we might go sometime, but for this afternoon I did not ask her. But do come and help me, Kate, dear. I must take off my habit and get together a few things for Effie and myself. I'm going to stay with her at Woodlands."

While the boys were giving Richards a clearer account of the accident, Kate within

doors was pouring forth an eager volley of questions over the packing of Marjorie's bag.

"Oh, is it really *the* Mr. Rolfe himself, — Miss Grace's Mr. Rolfe? And you say she is to go there to take care of Effie as soon as she comes home? Why, Marjorie, it's just like the ending of a novel, isn't it?"

"What *do* you mean, Kate?" asked Marjorie, taking the half-packed bag from her friend's unskilful fingers.

"Why, don't you see? They'll meet over Effie's sick-bed, and there'll be a reconciliation. Then they'll be engaged again in spite of all that has happened, and it will be all your doing!"

"How very foolish you are, Kate! All my doing? How can you say such a thing when poor Effie is suffering so, and *that* is all my doing? There, forgive me, dear old Kate — I didn't mean to be cross."

Kate followed her friend downstairs, feeling somewhat abashed by the rebuke, but she watched the buggy-top as it bobbed rapidly down the hill on its way to Woodlands with a thrill of pleasurable excite-

ment by no means incompatible with sympathy for Effie.

"Wal, some folks' troubles is other folks' blessin's!" quoth Mehitable at her side; from which remark it would appear that Kate's speculations were not unshared.

That was a novel evening in Marjorie's experience. First came the setting of poor Effie's ankle, at which her friend insisted on being present, winning much praise from the doctor for her nerve and her helpfulness in little ways. Then, as Effie was sleeping quietly under the influence of the opiate, the doctor banished every one from the sick-room except the housekeeper, and Marjorie wandered forlornly downstairs, and stood looking out, with a very serious face, on the wide terrace.

A quick step behind her made her turn hastily.

"Come," said Kenelm Rolfe's cheery voice, "I am sure you have had no supper. Neither have I, and, judging from my own appetite, you are famously hungry."

This was quite the truth, though Marjorie had had no time to think of it before, and

she was young enough to feel some diversion of her melancholy, as she followed her host into the great oak-panelled dining-room, where a charming little tea-table was spread for two.

"Now how comfortable this is!" exclaimed the young man heartily, throwing himself back in his chair, and looking across the table at Marjorie, who shyly took her place behind the tea-urn. "After staring for a week past at that wall opposite, how delightful it is to have some one to pour out my tea; and so unexpectedly too!"

"Have you been so lonely here?" asked Marjorie, aroused from her low spirits, for the time being, by the glance of the blithe, kindly blue eyes.

"Oh, wretchedly! for, as no one knows that I'm here, I've had no visitors at all. My own family have other plans for the summer, and I was just about to telegraph in desperation for a friend to keep me company in my solitude."

"We are so sorry to put you out in your plans—" Marjorie began.

"Don't speak of it! I'm heartily glad to *be* put out, for, lonely as I was, it would have been a great bore to have any one here just now. You and Miss Effie will be delightful company, — I never had two girl-visitors before, — but there isn't a man on the face of the earth with whom I could be amiable just now for an hour together!"

Marjorie laughed. "You don't look so ill-tempered, Mr. Rolfe."

"Don't I? Ah, India makes sad bears of us, unless the climate happens to agree with us, and it doesn't with me!"

"I thought you never meant to come back?" said Marjorie, involuntarily.

"From whom did you learn that, pray?" asked Mr. Rolfe, knitting his brows with so good an assumption of irritability that Marjorie colored in embarrassment, murmuring something about "Havensholme people having said that the place was shut up for many years, the family never came there now, and Mr. Rolfe was gone to India for good."

"Not he!" said her host. "I'm glad it was nothing worse than a rumor, for there

could not be a greater mistake. But you are not eating as you promised me you would."

He was so kind and so amusing, telling her odd stories of his life in India, plying her with all the good things on the table, and summoning the butler to bring others which he fancied she might like, that Marjorie was soon chatting as gayly as he could wish, longing, meanwhile, to hear him say something which should identify him with the hero of Miss Very's romance, but not daring to approach the subject, which, had she but known it, he was hoping some chance mention of Grace Forrester's name would allow him to introduce.

When tea was over, Rolfe betook himself to the piazza and, lighting a cigar, walked thoughtfully up and down, his arms behind him, and Marjorie stole upstairs to Effie's door. But Mrs. Dennison met her on the threshold, her finger on her lip, so there was nothing to do but go downstairs again, and, sitting solitary in the library, which was dimly lighted from the hall, watch the red spark of Rolfe's cigar, as he paced the

piazza. Again the sad thoughts came back. If Effie should be lamed! And what would Miss Forrester say? Marjorie pictured to herself the look of silent reproach in Grace's clear eyes, and her heart ached over the remembrance of her broken trust. "Why do I always do the wrong thing, I wonder?" she repeated to herself. She had said the same words to Charley Richards as they were driving from Woodlands, not, perhaps, expecting a reply.

"I suppose we all do when we are thinking only of what pleases ourselves," he had answered quite simply, and Marjorie, in some pique at what she thought the implied reproof, had relapsed into silence during the remainder of the drive.

But now, as she sat in the darkness, the words came back to her. "*Do* I think only of what pleases myself?" she said sadly. "Do the other girls do what I say not because I am wiser than they are, but because they are so much more generous than I?"

The butler bringing in the lamp, which he set down on a distant table, with a dis-

creet glance at the pensive attitude of the young stranger, Marjorie's light dress became visible to the smoker on the piazza.

"What, are you there?" he exclaimed, throwing away his cigar, and stepping through the long window near which Marjorie sat. "And keeping blindman's holiday, too?"

He bent down to look more closely at her face, for Marjorie, fearing lest her voice might betray the tears, against which she was struggling, did not at once reply.

"What, homesick?" he said kindly, taking one of her hands. "I'm so sorry! How shall I manage to cheer you up?"

"No, indeed, not homesick at all! You are far too kind for that. But I can't be happy till I have seen Miss Forrester and know what she will say to me."

"And what do you think she will say?" asked the young man, eagerly, sitting down on the low window-seat beside Marjorie's chair, and looking earnestly at her in the dim light.

"She will not need to tell me that it is all my own fault," said Marjorie, tremu-

lously; "I know that already. Perhaps she will not say anything, but I shall feel it all the same when I meet her eyes, for I ought not to have gone."

"And is she so very stern with you girls, then?" asked Kenelm Rolfe, trying to hide his interest in the reply under a boyish laugh.

"No, oh no! But she *trusted* me, and if you know her, Mr. Rolfe, you know how one wants to deserve her trust."

"Why, then?"

"Why?" cried Marjorie. "Because she is almost always right."

There was a moment's silence. "I am very glad you put in that *almost*," said the young man presently, giving a kindly little pressure to the hand he still held. "Because, to tell the truth, I am very anxious, just now, to prove that Miss Forrester has been wrong at least once. Come," he added, laughing at Marjorie's look of astonishment, "I see we are both extremely desirous to ask one another questions, and, as this light is an admirable aid to shy people, I will allow you to begin."

"I think I know more about **you** than you know about me," said Marjorie, with a glimmer of fun in her voice, "so *you* had better begin."

"Well, then, I want to know extremely why you girls are at Miss Forrester's?"

"I think," said Marjorie, cautiously feeling her way along the dangerous ground, "that Miss Forrester missed a great many things that she used to have, and so felt lonely and sad. She likes girls, so she had us come to take up her thoughts and brighten her."

"Lonely and sad!" echoed the young man, rising from his seat and bending over Marjorie. "Do you really think she is? 'Missed what she used to have!' What does she miss?"

"Oh, there is so much for her to miss, you know. Her father, and — and her plans in life, and — oh, Mr. Rolfe, it must be so hard for her to be lame!"

"Ah!" said Kenelm Rolfe, half lifting his arms and letting them fall again at his sides.

But the word had recalled to Marjorie the sore spot in her own heart.

"Poor little Effie!" she exclaimed. "If she should be lame, too. I could not bear it!"

"My dear girl," said her new friend, patting her hand reassuringly, "there is not the slightest danger of Effie's being lame; she is getting on capitally. But Gr — but Miss Forrester; tell me a little more about her. You see, Miss Marjorie, I am an old, old friend of hers, and I have been away so long. 'Lonely and sad,' you say, — is she ever *sad?*"

"Very seldom," said Marjorie. "She is always bright with us girls, full of interest in our plans, and always making plans of her own for us to have a good time."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Rolfe, eagerly, as Marjorie paused.

"But sometimes, when she is sitting quietly by herself, a sort of far-away look comes into her eyes, as if she were thinking of something or some one that she missed, and if she fancies no one notices her, then her face is sad."

"Then you really think that she misses — some one, as you say?" exclaimed Mr.

Rolfe. "Thank you for saying that, at least, Miss Marjorie!"

Then, as the girl looked up in astonishment at his vehemence, he shook her hand heartily, saying, smilingly: —

"There, I foresee that we are going to be excellent friends, and I am so much obliged to you for having your accident happen at Woodlands, if it must have happened at all! Don't lie awake crying over it, will you, for everything will turn out all right, I assure you. We will have Miss Forrester here as soon as she comes back, and you shall ask her forgiveness to your heart's content. What do you say, Miss Marjorie — you think she will come, don't you?"

He asked the question coaxingly, as if longing for reassurance on a point which seemed to himself doubtful.

"Of course she will," said Marjorie, in some surprise at the question. "Effie will want her, you know."

"Of course," said the young man, brightening. "Here is your bedroom candle, Miss Marjorie, if you are going up. But I have

got off scot-free in this examination. You haven't asked me a single question!"

Marjorie smiled demurely, thinking that Miss Very had left her little to ask, and they parted at the foot of the hall stairs with a sense of mutual good understanding.

CHAPTER XV.

TOO STRONG A CURRENT.

EFFIE waked next morning in excellent spirits, pleased with her new surroundings and only anxious, in her loving little fashion, that Marjorie, too, should see the sunny side of things.

"I shan't mind one bit being here for six weeks!" she exclaimed brightly, "it is such a lovely place and Mr. Rolfe is so very kind. Really, he is quite like a prince in the fairy tales, and brings me just what I wish for. He has been in this morning to bring me flowers and grapes, and whenever I want he will read to me and sing me funny songs. Then I have you with me, and perhaps by to-morrow, Miss Forrester will come. Only please don't look so sad, Marjorie — it was no fault of yours."

"Yes, it was, Effie. You would never have gone if it had not been for me, and you know I had to coax you into it."

"Oh, that was only because I fancied that Miss Forrester would rather have us wait until she was at home. But just as soon as you said she was willing—"

"I only said that she was willing we should go *sometime*," Marjorie interrupted. "That was just it, Effie. I never said a word to her about our going yesterday because I was afraid she might say, No, and I wanted to have my own way."

Effie's face fell a little. "Oh, was that it?" she said. "But your way is generally a very good one, Marjorie," she added affectionately.

"I wish you girls would not think so," said Marjorie, dejectedly.

"Why?"

"Because it isn't worth your while to take my way. I'm not so prudent as Rachel, nor so generous as Kate, nor so amiable as you, Effie. All I care for is having other people do as I wish because I like to take the lead; and if I do anything that you think worth praising, it is usually only because I wanted to be praised."

"Oh!" said Effie, again. This time it

was an expostulatory "Oh!" and she turned her face to the wall as if she did not care to talk any more on the subject. In truth, the most unwelcome words we can hear from the lips of an idol of our own making is the assurance that our worship is ill bestowed.

Soon after the doctor's visit came Mrs. Forrester, gentle and calm as usual, but full of loving solicitude for Effie. Both Rolfe and Marjorie met her in the hall, so the girl witnessed the mutual warmth of their greeting.

"How good it is to see you again!" he exclaimed, holding her hands and looking with eager eyes into her sweet, placid face.

"And you, dear Kenelm! I did not think that I should see you again for many a year."

"I could not stay away," he said impatiently. "But where is—"

"Oh, hasn't Miss Forrester come?" cried Marjorie, pressing forward.

"No, dear. One of us must stay with Kate and Rachel, you know, and we thought it would be better for Grace to be there."

Rolfe's face clouded. "I hoped"—he began.

"I do so want to see her," said Marjorie, in a trembling voice.

"You shall go to her, then," said Mrs. Forrester, kindly, "though for the present you had better stay here to cheer up Effie."

"I would not be the means of keeping Grace from the child," said Rolfe, in a low tone. "I can go away if she prefers it. Tell her so from me, please, Mrs. Forrester."

"No, no—better as it is, Kenelm," the old lady said, and, whether from the gentle touch on his arm, or the sweet tone, his face softened at once, and he led the way to Effie's room without another word.

Effie, too, was disappointed, for much as the girls liked the sweet, motherly old lady, she could not fill her daughter's place to any of them.

"But Miss Grace would get very tired taking care of me," Effie reasoned with herself, "and it is very selfish in me to want her to come."

Marjorie, however, resigned herself less easily to disappointment than her sweet-

tempered little friend. Some time after Mrs. Forrester had gone upstairs, Rolfe, descending, found his young guest sitting disconsolately on the lowest step of the staircase.

"What is it now?" he asked, good-naturedly, stopping short.

"Could I go over to see Miss Forrester for a little while?"

"Why, of course," he exclaimed brightly. "The very thing! I will drive you myself. We'll go at once and get back before any one has a chance to miss us."

Grace was sitting, as usual, in the study with the two girls when Marjorie burst in, bright and breezy from her rapid drive. Rachel considerately drew Kate out of the room on some plea, leaving Marjorie alone with Grace.

"Oh, Miss Forrester!" cried the girl, "why don't you say something to show that you are angry with me? Scold me — be stern with me — I have deserved it!"

"Dear Marjorie," said Grace, drawing her down on the arm of her chair, "I never believe in 'after-claps.' If I could have

said anything beforehand to save either you or Effie the pain, be sure that I would have been as stern as you could wish. But now — do you think I could give you any sharper reproof than your own conscience does?"

Marjorie silently shook her head.

"Then what would be the use?"

"But it is not the first time. Oh, Miss Grace, do you know that ever since I have been here you have never told me to do, or not to do, one single thing that I have not longed to disobey you?"

"I must believe you if you say so, certainly," said Grace, looking frankly into the flushed, uplifted face. "But why, Marjorie?"

"It seems to be my nature," said Marjorie, sorrowfully. "I never defy mamma or Rosamond, or anybody who I am sure loves me, but if I do not think any one quite approves of me, why then —"

"And you are so sure that I don't approve?" smiled Grace.

"But *do* you?" asked the girl, earnestly.

Grace laid her hand on the young shoulder, hesitating a moment before she replied.

"Dear," she said at last, "don't be too anxious to ask that question of any one. Do not think whether you have this or that person's approval of your conduct: simply ask yourself if it be *right*. Do not make duty a matter of approbation at all, but let it be a thing between your Heavenly Father and yourself. In that way I am sure you will find more moral courage to resist your temptations, more peace when others think you are wrong, more help when duty seems less sustaining than you had hoped."

She looked in the troubled young face very brightly and lovingly as she spoke, and Marjorie, whose heart was far more touched by the few simple words than she would have been by the keenest rebuke, threw her arms round Grace's neck, and gave her her first voluntary kiss.

They walked slowly to the end of the avenue where the buggy was standing, Grace leaning on the girl's arm. It was

not till they reached the carriage that Marjorie remembered Mr. Rolfe. He was leaning against the trunk of an apple tree, looking very thoughtful, and now, at sight of them, came forward quickly to meet them. Grace had no time to feel reluctance at finding herself drawn into an interview which she would certainly have chosen to avoid.

The color, indeed, rushed to her brow and cheek, but she met him with outstretched hand and her usual simple hearty tones. "I am glad to see you, Kenelm. I had heard of your return, but did not know that you were so near."

"I did not come to persecute you," said Rolfe, rapidly — Marjorie's keen young eyes noted that he still held Grace's hand in his, — "only to beg that, if your pupil wants you, you will come to Woodlands. I can go away if my presence there prevents your coming."

"It shall not, certainly, if Effie wants me," Grace replied, calmly, "but mother and Marjorie will stay there for the present, if you will be so kind as to be their host,

so I shall not be needed. You are well, Kenelm?"

"As you see," he replied, brusquely. "Can you not tell me a word about yourself, Grace?"

There was no resisting his eager, pleading eyes. "I am well," said Grace, hurriedly, "and — and happier."

He let her hand fall, and turned to help Marjorie into the buggy, but she had already sprung in, eager to seem, at least, out of hearing.

"You say that more easily than I shall ever be able to, I think," he said, in a low tone, then sprang into the carriage and drove rapidly away.

"You do not need to ask me any more questions now, Miss Marjorie," he said presently, in his impulsive fashion, "for you know my secret."

"Oh," cried Marjorie, "I knew that before I had ever seen you! But now that I know you — oh, Mr. Rolfe, I do think she must love you enough to forget everything except what you want!"

"Why, you dear little soul!" cried the

young man, heartily, "I did not know that I had so warm an ally under my roof! I have no knowledge as to your potency, Miss Marjorie, but good wishes help, at least, to keep one's heart up."

And Kenelm was not long in securing the good wishes of all four girls.

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD TIMES.

"Do tell me something about yourself when you were a boy, Mr. Rolfe."

"Oh, I wasn't at all a good boy, Miss Effie. I was always either getting into scrapes myself, or else drawing my playmates into them."

"Never mind!" said Effie, laying her head back on the cushions of her long chair, and looking at him with a smile of pleased anticipation, "good boys are never the most entertaining ones to read about, and I am sure you must have been a *nice* boy! Tell me about one of the scrapes, please."

They were sitting in the bay-window, where Effie's chair had been drawn that she might look out on the brilliant September sunshine, and the scarlet geraniums blazing in their beds. Under the awning

that shaded the little balcony outside sat Mrs. Forrester, as much at home with her work-basket and rocking-chair as if she had been there all her life.

"Now that is very good of you — to be so sure that I was 'nice'! On what do you base your supposition, Miss Effie?"

"Why, you are so very good to us all. You pet Marjorie and me as if you really enjoyed having us here to give you so much trouble. You knew him, didn't you, Mrs. Forrester, when he was a boy?"

"Yes, very well," replied the sweet old voice from outside. "He was rather a scapegrace, as he says, but his heart was in the right place, and he was always the stanchest of friends."

"He hopes he may still be that, Mrs. Forrester, if he can be nothing more." Rolfe's face flushed as he spoke. "Well, Miss Effie, if you must have the story, here it is for you: —

"When I was about ten years old, I had a private tutor, an excellent teacher, but a lantern-jawed, solemn fellow, of whom I could not, for the life of me, help making

fun sometimes. He did not easily take a joke, but I think he sometimes divined that I was mimicking him, and, accordingly, he was not very fond of me. My sister Ellen had some lessons with him, too, and, by way of keeping her company, a little girl from the neighborhood came to study with her."

"I suppose you did not like that much," Effie remarked. "Boys hate so to do anything with girls."

"Yes, usually," said Rolfe, "but this girl was different. Well, one hot summer day, when we all found it hard work to study, Mr. Rogers was called out of the room for a while, and immediately we children jumped up from our seats, and began to look about us for a bit of mischief as a refreshment to our tired minds and bodies. A spray of roses came into the room from the trellis outside, and in the heart of one of the roses was a bee, a great, dusty, droning fellow.

"'You darsn't catch that bee, and put him in my paper cage, Ellen,' said I. I had been amusing myself when Mr. Rogers

was not looking by making a paper cage behind my big atlas.

"Ellen was a bit of a coward, and she drew back.

"'I'll do it for you,' said — the other little girl, who hadn't an idea what fear meant. And she whisked the bumble-bee off the spray, and popped him into my paper cage. This was done far too easily for my taste, as I had hoped to excite Ellen to some of her scared shrieks and shuddering fits, so I looked about me for more game. Just at that moment Mr. Rogers returned, and, settling himself in the arm-chair in front of my desk, proceeded to hear the girls recite. I watched him a while, as he craned his long neck forward to look over their exercises, until the temptation proved too strong for me; then, as his head was bent over the book on his knee, I thrust the paper cage into the space between the thin neck and his collar.

"'Boom! Boom!' went the imprisoned bee, and, to my huge delight, he kept putting up his hand to brush away the insect which he imagined was buzzing about his

head. Presently out came his handkerchief, and, as he whisked it to right and left, he looked angrily about him. This was too much for Ellen, and she burst out laughing. The other girl had not seen my naughty trick. Just at that moment a flap of the handkerchief dislodged the cage, and it fell at Mr. Rogers's feet.

"He picked it up, furious. 'Who brought this bee into the schoolroom?' he asked, with an indignant glance at me.

"But Grace stepped forward. 'I did, Mr. Rogers.'

"'And you put it in the cage, as well?' Mr. Rogers still spoke sternly, though evidently surprised, for Grace was his favorite pupil.

"'Yes, sir, I put it in.'

"The catechising stopped there. 'Why, Grace!' cried little Ellen, 'you know you did not put it on Mr. Rogers's collar!'

"'I didn't say I did,' said the girl, standing her ground very stoutly.

"'But you let me infer that you did,' said Mr. Rogers, still in a towering passion, 'and that is acting a falsehood.'

"'You didn't ask me that question,' said the sturdy little mortal.

"'No matter. You knew my meaning, and it was just as false to pretend to be the culprit—'

"'No, it wasn't any such thing!' I cried, coming to the rescue. 'It was I who *stumped* her to do it, and I made the cage and stuck it inside your collar—so there now!'

"You see I was a very impertinent boy when I was angry. Mr. Rogers turned upon the real culprit with much better grace than would have been possible in the case of the supposed offender. I was kept in for an hour after my lessons and deprived of my dessert, which, being a boy of good appetite, I felt keenly."

"If I had been your sister, I should have brought you some dessert," said Effie, laughing.

"Oh, Ellen was far too well-behaved for that, but Grace managed to smuggle a piece of cake into her apron pocket,—a piece that had been given to her, she assured me,—and, when nobody was about,

came clambering up the rose-trellis to give it to me."

"Good for Miss Forrester!" exclaimed Effie, in high glee.

"How do you know it was she?" asked Kenelm. "I named no names."

"Oh, yes, you called her Grace."

"Did I?" said the young man, discomfited. "It is not an uncommon name, however."

"No, but it was so like Miss Forrester to do it; besides, I know you were great friends once on a time. She has your photograph hanging by her bedside now, and that is why we came to know your face so well. Tell me something more about her, Mr. Rolfe."

Effie, it will be remembered, was the one of the four girls who had not heard Miss Very's story.

"With all my heart!" said Rolfe, looking at his little questioner with friendly, almost grateful eyes. "She was a brave girl, Effie, with more pluck than any of you, I think, unless, perhaps, Marjorie. We had quite an adventure once."

"Oh, tell me about it, please!" cried Effie, rising from her nest of cushions, in delightful expectancy.

Rolfe shook his finger at her, in good-humored warning.

"Then mind you keep your position, young lady! You're not to put your ankle out of joint for any of my stories, remember!

"A year or two after the bumble-bee mishap, we three — Grace, Ellen and I — had a little hut on one of the islands in the river. I had built it with the help of some of the other fellows, of logs and stones with a bark roof, and we thought it quite a model of completeness. I used to row the girls down there whenever we felt inclined to retire from the world, and, as no one knew our secret, we were as safe in our seclusion as if we had really been on a desert island."

"Delightful!" murmured Effie.

"We had been camping there for the better part of a long summer day, bringing our provisions with us. I had begun to fancy myself a little bored by the girls'

society — boys are such conceited animals, as you know, Miss Effie! — and I had roamed off by myself, some way down the river, for a little fishing. I became fascinated with my sport, and quite forgot the girls till the sun had set, and it had grown too dark to see my line. Then, remembering how terrified Ellen would be, and how bad the river damp was for her throat, I put up my rod in all haste, and pulled for the island as hard as I could.

"When I was still some distance off, I heard a shot from the direction of our hut, but, supposing it to be some sportsman in the woods beyond, thought nothing of it except to regret that I had left my fowling-piece leaning against the wall of our log cabin, so that I had no chance of a shot myself. But, as I approached our island, I became aware that something very unusual was going on. I could see Ellen's light dress, as she stood on the highest rocky point of our little island, looking out in desperation for her careless brother. Grace was nowhere to be seen, and, as this too, was unusual, I rowed still faster, and

was speedily at the little landing-place. Then Ellen came flying down to meet me, and clung to me, crying and sobbing in terror and distress.

"'What is the matter? What is the matter, Nelly?' I kept repeating.

"'Oh, Ken!' she exclaimed, as soon as she could speak. 'Something dreadful has happened! We might have been robbed — we might have been killed — we should be now if it had not been for Grace and the gun!'

"'My gun? Where is Grace?' I exclaimed, frightened in my turn.

"'She is in the hut, taking care of the man — I dare not stay there, he looks so frightfully fierce,' Ellen panted.

"'So you have left Grace alone with him! What do you mean by *the man?*' said I, startled out of my wits by her half-explanation; and I set off for the hut as fast as I could go, Ellen following at a distance and imploring me to wait for her.

"On the floor of our hut lay a rough-looking fellow with worn, dusty clothes, a fierce-looking customer enough, as Ellen

had said. Beside him knelt Grace, binding up his arm with her handkerchief and Ellen's. The floor and the bandages were stained with blood, and my gun lay across the threshold.

"'Good heavens, Grace!' cried I, frightened out of my senses at the sight. 'What are you doing? And you, fellow, what are you about here, scaring these girls?'

"I was only a boy, but I think I must have looked ferocious enough. The fellow muttered something that I could not hear, in a sheepish fashion, but Grace spoke for him.

"'Don't be angry, Kenelm,' she said, quietly going on with her bandaging, 'the man came here because, as he said, he was tired and hungry, and had slept here for two or three nights. He asked us for something to eat, and we gave him some of our dinner; then he asked for money, and when we told him we had none, he said that Ellen must give him her watch. She wouldn't, of course, so then he rushed at her to seize it. She was terribly frightened, and I told the man that if he did not go away instantly I would shoot him.

I suppose he did not believe me, for he snatched Ellen's chain. So I did shoot, and wounded his right arm. I'm sorry; but I'm sure he deserved it.'

"'What do you mean, you scoundrel, by coming to our hut and frightening defenceless girls?' said I, in a fury.

"'They ain't defenceless so long as they've got a gun, and sech a plucky young lady to fire it,' said the fellow, with a grin. 'As to the hut, I've slep' here more'n one night, and if I've a mind to, I'll do it agin, young feller! There, thank you kindly, Miss, that'll do; and I don't bear you any grudge for the hurt, neither. You done jes' right, though if that other one hadn't screeched so, I'd ha' been away afore now, watch and all!'

"'I dare say you would, you villain!' said I, choking with wrath, but Ellen clung to my arm, begging me not to infuriate him, and Grace said, very coolly, 'I shall take you home now to my father, who is a doctor, and he will dress your wound properly.'

"'Don't you do no sech a thing, Miss,'

said the man, alarmed. 'It'll be the ruin of me!'

"'You shan't come to any harm, I promise,' said Grace, and, as the man could not row himself or swim with his wounded arm, and must either stay at the island and have Dr. Forrester come to him, or go to Dr. Forrester, he decided on the latter course, and I had the pleasure of pulling him ashore.

"I leave you to imagine what a sensation we created when we tramped through Mehitable's kitchen with that dusty, blood-stained vagabond at our heels—"

"Mehitable?" cried Effie, delighted. "Oh, was she here, then? I can imagine just how she looked, her hands and eyebrows up and her mouth and eyes very round —*so!*"

Kenelm nodded, smiling. "What Grace said to her father I can't tell you, but I know that the fellow stayed at the Doctor's till his arm was well, and after that he still stayed on, doing jobs in the neighborhood till he finally got employment in the factory. I think gratitude to the Doctor

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may have done a good deal toward his reformation, but I am inclined to think that the first impression must have been made by Grace's courage."

"Oh," said Effie, glowing, "she *was* brave! I hardly think even Marjorie would have dared to do what she did. Kate and I could only have screamed, and as for Rachel —"

"Don't be too sure of what might have happened," said Rolfe. "Even Rachel may turn out a heroine when she is put to the proof. But all girls are not like Grace: she was a heroine always."

The two were silent for awhile after this. Mrs. Forrester had left the balcony before Rolfe began his second story, and he sat now, leaning his head on his hand, a dreamy expression settling on his face. Effie watched him wistfully.

"What is it, little one?" he said, at last, rousing himself. "You look as if you wanted to ask some question."

"No, oh, no!" said Effie, hastily; but she did not lose the wistful expression.

"Didn't you like my story?"

"Yes, indeed, I did. I was only wondering—"

"Wondering at what?"

"Why things and people change so—why friends are not always friends—why boys and girls who were once so much together are not friends when they grow up!"

"Ah! why, indeed, my little Effie!" said the young man, the sudden color flushing his handsome face, and showing that he understood the meaning of her words. "But you may be sure that, though it usually takes two to make a quarrel, I am not to blame in this!"

Over this speech Effie was still knitting her smooth brows in perplexity when Marjorie entered. Rolfe seized the opportunity to slip away, for he felt over-excited, as the coolest of us is apt to feel after talking freely of happy days forever past.

"Marjorie," whispered Effie, drawing her friend's face down to the pillow, "do you think that Mr. Rolfe and Miss Grace have really quarrelled?"

"What a question, Effie!" Marjorie ex-

claimed, startled,— for it had been the prudent policy of the elder girls to keep little Effie in the dark about Miss Very's disclosures. "Why should you think they had quarrelled?"

"She never comes here at all, you know, and yet they were once such friends. Mr. Rolfe has been telling me stories of when he was a boy, and they played together and knew each other as well as you and Clifford do. I think he must have liked her even better than his own sister."

"Be sure you never ask him or Miss Grace any questions about it," said Marjorie, with her sententious air; "it isn't an ordinary quarrel at all — not the kind that people talk about, I mean."

"Oh, dear!" said Effie, pitifully. "It must be something very, very bad, then!"

And, though she dutifully promised silence on the subject, she could not help regarding Rolfe with a look of solicitude in her childlike blue eyes which puzzled him not a little.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BULL-FIGHT.

"KATE, I wish that you could be persuaded for once to abandon that red shawl as part of your sketching outfit!"

"Why, Ray? I think it a very picturesque feature in the landscape — the artist's bit of color, you know. I take it mainly out of consideration for other people."

"But I think," laughed Rachel, "that the only eyes it is likely to gladden are those of some pugnacious bull, and, in that case, the fright he would give us would more than counterbalance any delight which the shawl might give to the eye of some artistic farmer. Do leave it at home — I'm afraid of cows!"

"Silly little Rachel!" said Kate, "what a coward she is! No, my dear, I have sketched in Havensholme all summer long,

red shawl and all, and never excited even a cow to anger! Nobody except you would have thought of there being any danger!"

"Perhaps not," said Rachel, meekly. "I know I'm not very brave."

And the red shawl, accordingly, went into the pony carriage.

The two girls and Miss Forrester had been sitting for some time in the upland pasture which was, just then, Kate's sketching-ground, and, as the shadows began to lengthen, the young artist wandered into the next field, "prospecting," as she said, for the morrow, leaving behind her all her equipments, canvas, colors, camp-stool, red shawl, and all. Grace and Rachel were talking very earnestly, and scarcely noticed her departure.

"Oh, Miss Grace," Rachel said, "I am so glad we four girls came to you this summer! This quiet time and the talks we have had together, seem to have made my plans for the future so much clearer. I wanted to be a teacher, and hoped I might in time go to Radcliffe College; but the future seemed so far away and so doubtful

that I could not bear to think about it at all."

"Well," said Grace, smilingly, "and does the future loom so much less terrible now?"

"It does, really," said Rachel, "for, when I talk with you, I seem to see, as I never did before, that it all unfolds gradually, bit by bit, step by step, until at last one is living the life she had planned out, and hardly knowing how she came to it."

"Yes, that is the secret of it all, Ray — just to leave the future in God's hands, and let our only concern be how we act in the present. Then it does unfold, as you say — not exactly to the end we had hoped, perhaps —"

"But I mean to be a teacher," Rachel said, very earnestly; "even if it were not my wish, it would be my duty."

"Yes, you will carry out that plan," Grace said, cheerfully, "and I believe that you will succeed in it. But even if you *seemed* to fail — even if your life turned out quite differently from your own plan, it would not be failure if you went on doing

your duty every day. That is such a comforting thought, Rachel — "

Grace stopped short, for a sudden look of blank terror had come into the young face turned toward her, as she sat with her back to the slope of the steep grassy hillock. At the top of the knoll were a few pine trees, a shady retreat for those cattle which were agile enough to climb the bank after drinking at the sleepy little pond in the hollow below. Grace turned involuntarily in response to the look of frozen horror in Rachel's eyes, and saw, standing on the knoll above them, a huge, dun-colored bull, his heavy black head lowered, his bloodshot eyeballs glaring at them as they sat at the foot of the little hill on Kate's red shawl. Grace's glance seemed to infuriate him the more. He lifted one hoof, pawed the ground, and, with a mighty bellow, seemed about to charge upon them.

"My dear child," said Grace, very quietly and firmly to Rachel, who was absolutely dumb with terror — both had risen to their feet and Grace was supporting herself on her crutches — "My dear child, keep your

face turned this way, and go, as steadily as you can, toward the fence. Do not make a panic rush — remember that, Rachel! I am going to throw the shawl over Kate's easel, and slip behind it; he will come to that first."

Rachel looked at Grace a second in bewilderment; then, as her meaning dawned upon her, she burst into a passion of tears.

"And you think I would leave you, then?" she cried. "Do you take me for such a coward? Oh, Miss Grace!"

"It is no time for tears, Rachel," said Grace, almost sternly. "Do as I bid you!"

"I will never do *that!*" cried Rachel, passionately, and, darting in front of Grace, she seized the red shawl and threw it over Kate's easel; then, before Grace could prevent her, she had put her arm round her taller companion's waist, thus taking the place of one of her crutches.

The bull, his attention suddenly diverted from the human victims who had crouched on that obnoxious bit of color, to this flaming enemy set upright to defy him, stopped

a moment, bewildered. Then, pawing the ground, he rushed at the easel with a second terrific bellow.

Meantime, Kate, in the next field, had been wandering happily about through the grass and daisies, making a frame with her half-shut hand for various pretty local "bits," and promising herself many new sketches, when a loud roar, as of some horned creature, made her start and tremble. Notwithstanding her good-natured derision of Rachel, she was not altogether free from a dread of cattle-kind herself — who is? — and the startled glance which she cast around her suggested a precipitate flight. Reassured, however, by seeing only a wide expanse of grass and daisies, she was placidly going on with her survey, when a second bellow seemed to make the very ground beneath her feet tremble. Quaking in every limb, Kate began to run toward the fence that divided the fields, crying out, half-involuntarily, "Oh, Rachel, I'm coming!" But before she could reach the fence, she saw that her puny efforts to help were too late. The dreaded monster

of Rachel's fancy was already in possession of the field, head lowered, horns almost touching the ground as he rushed, foaming with fury, at the target into which poor Kate's easel had been converted. But alas! the bulwark was far too frail to withstand such a furious charge. At the first touch of his horns, down went the easel, and shawl and canvas were gored to bits.

Then he raised his head, and, catching sight of the two figures, still retreating steadily, but not rapidly, toward the fence, faces still set bravely to the foe, he shook his head in renewed fury and prepared for a fresh charge.

Kate was in agony. Quite a distance still lay between the fence and the fugitives. They would be gored to death before her very eyes! She tried to scream for help; she even tried to climb the fence, but a sort of nervelessness seemed to have affected limbs and tongue alike, — the paralysis of extreme terror, — and she remained rooted to the spot, tottering against the fence for support, her eyes staring wildly,

On came the Bull Page 231

and every vestige of color gone from her face.

On came the bull; Kate involuntarily closed her eyes.

"Now, now, Rachel!" Grace screamed, and the shuddering watcher raised her head. She might well believe that she did not see aright, but what she *seemed* to see was this: she saw the bull come on, foaming and snorting; she saw Grace, still leaning on Rachel's arm, raise her remaining crutch and deal the furious creature a blow directly across the eyes; she saw little Rachel, puny, timid, little Rachel, throw the shawl she had been wearing over the bull's head, so as to confuse him still more, half-blinded as he was by pain and fury, and she saw — most dream-like of all! — she saw Grace seize Rachel's hand, and drag her toward the fence — Grace, unsupported, crutchless, but actually running as one runs for life! A moment after they were under the fence, the lowest rail of which fortunately left space enough for them, and were safe at her side!

"Oh, Miss Grace!" cried Kate, beside

herself with terror and the dread of finding that it was all a dream, "Miss Grace, *you are walking!*"

"Am I?" said Grace, with a bewildered glance at her own limbs; then, shuddering as her eyes fell on the furious bull, from which only a slender rail fence divided them, she cried, "I do not know anything till we are fully out of danger! Come, Rachel — children, come!" And, seizing a hand of each, she ran down the steep path leading to the roadside, where the pony was placidly nibbling the trees under which he was tied. She unfastened him, made the two girls get in first, then, climbing in herself, she sank back on the seat, drew Rachel to her, and exclaimed, "Oh, my poor little girl! can you ever get over that fright? If you only can, I believe I can say, 'Thank God!' for it, terrible as it was!"

"And so can I!" sobbed Rachel. "Indeed this is worth it all!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING."

"WHY, it's only what the doctors foretold, after all," Charles Richards remarked, in his quiet fashion. "They always said that the only chance for Miss Forrester's recovery lay in some sudden fright, some shock which should bring back the power of motion."

"But it is so seldom that the doctors are verified in their wildest predictions," said Clifford. "You might at least allow that there is a miracle in that."

"With all my heart, if it will gratify you," said Richards, smiling. "I was only proving to you that the thing had a common-sense basis after all, and might be depended upon for a permanent result!"

"I'm not so very anxious for the proof."

quoth Cliff. "When I can see the result, it's enough for me!" Then, bursting into a laugh, as a slow smile overspread Richards's face, "Not a very good principle that, you think, for a mathematician. Well, I own you have me there! However, I'm confident I shall pull through, thanks to you and this summer's digging, and that's all I want."

Clifford had come to say good-by to the two girls at the Forresters' as he was on his way to Newport for a fortnight's visit before the college examination. The wonder of Grace's recovery was the common topic of conversation, though Kate had to be the narrator, and answer all the eager inquiries. Rachel could not yet speak of the accident without turning pale and shuddering, while Grace herself said little, and moved quietly about as if she had never known what lameness was, but with a calm, happy light in her eyes.

Clifford, who had just come from a farewell call at Woodlands, had brought with him a note from Effie, which Grace read, smiling.

"Do come, dear Miss Grace, and let me see you walking with my own eyes! Do come, *in spite of everything!* Quarrels are such hard things to keep up when people are very happy. But please don't let the other girls know I wrote that.

"Your loving

"EFFIE."

"'*In spite of everything?*'" Grace repeated the underscored words. "What can the child mean by that? But it would be cruel to refuse her. Kate and Rachel, I am going to see Effie for a little while. I shall not need my pony-carriage, dears, and need not take either of you away."

She took her garden hat from its nail in the hall, and walked lightly down the avenue, the four on the piazza watching her as she went. Up the hilly road for a little way, then through the gap in the stone wall which led by a short cut through the fields to Woodlands.

"I suppose they knocked that stone out of the wall in the *old times* when they used to play together," said Kate, unconsciously

speaking her thoughts aloud, then blushing and smiling confusedly when Clifford asked, "Who?"

It was a soft mild day in September; fleecy white clouds in the sky and a dim blue haziness in the air softened the outline of distant objects. Here and there hung a bough, gold against the green; the ferns in the hollow, on either side of the wood-path, showed straw-colored fronds; the air was no longer full of the notes of birds, and the noises of the insects which had chirped and trilled so ceaselessly all summer; only, when twilight came, the crickets chirped shrilly, and, as Grace trod the familiar path, red squirrels looked friendlily at her from their shy bright eyes, and darted across the path from one tree to another. Here and there the path was almost overgrown with brambles and undergrowth: the memory of those happy childish days rose vividly before her as she walked. She opened the little wicket gate, and found herself in the old-fashioned garden, now all ablaze with autumn flowers. No one was in sight; the water-jets whirling in the sun-

shine on the lawn were the only objects in motion as Grace threaded the gravel paths and ascended the terraces. The hall door of the great stone house stood wide open, but no one was in sight; only from a distance came voices in frequent animated exclamation, Marjorie and some one else playing lawn-tennis.

Grace hesitated a moment, but deciding not to join her, went up the staircase, unheralded, and looked into the door of the little oriel room, which was, as she knew, appropriated to Effie. How familiar it all was! She paused a moment on the threshold — not a sound. It was like the Enchanted Palace of the Sleeping Beauty, and no wonder, for, as she entered softly, she saw Effie lying in her great chair by the window, enjoying the most childlike of slumbers. Her imprisonment had been too full of novelty to pall upon her, and the lovely little pink and white face was as round and fresh as ever — smiling, too, as at some happy thoughts, not absent even in dreams.

Grace stood looking at her for a moment.

"Dear little sunny soul!" she said to herself, "she will never brood over shadows, even if they should come into her life," and she sat down near Effie's chair, turning her face in the other direction lest the little sleeper should become conscious of her scrutiny, even through her closed eyelids. From her seat she could see Marjorie and Rolfe playing tennis below, the girl all graceful animation and the young man excited to laughing interest by her eagerness. Mrs. Forrester sat in the shadow of the house, a book in her hand, raising her head now and then, when a louder exclamation than usual threatened to wake the little sleeper above, and giving a warning gesture toward the window.

Grace sat watching them for some time, then turned away, and, resting her head on her hand, waited patiently for Effie to wake.

She sat what seemed a long time, the voices in the garden coming to her ear at intervals, till at last she ceased to notice them, and did not miss them when they paused. A stealthy footstep at the door

was the first sound that broke upon her reverie, and she turned involuntarily with her finger on her lip. It was Rolfe.

Each started at sight of the other, but Grace was the first to regain her self-possession. She pointed to Effie's chair, and motioned him to draw back. He obeyed, but, with something of his boyish wilfulness in his eyes, would not go farther than the room on the opposite side of the hall. He remained stubbornly leaning his back against the wall, and from that position made smiling, but determined gestures to Grace to come to him. At last she arose and went.

She felt his eyes fixed anxiously upon her as she took the few steps that lay between them, not like one who is half afraid to trust to a newly regained power, but like one from whose mind all thought of infirmity is absent. When she came nearer, she saw that his eyes were filled with happy tears. He held out his arms. She hesitated a moment, but the controlling impulse was too strong. She let him take her hands in his, and raised her eyes to his face.

"You have come to me at last!" he whispered.

"No, I came because Effie sent for me."

"Grace, you promised me!" half reproachfully.

"Yes, I did, Kenelm," she answered frankly. "But I can scarcely seem to realize the happiness as yet."

"And I have never been able to realize the separation!"

The words broke out of the whisper in which he had begun them with a little gleeful ring, as he drew her, unresisting now, into his strong arms.

Effie stirred uneasily on her pillows, opened her eyes, and, sitting as upright as she was allowed, peered through the crack of the door. No one was visible, but there was a low murmur of voices, one of which she was sure that she recognized.

"Miss Grace, is that you?" she cried joyously.

"Yes, Effie, I am here."

"I knew you would come!" cried the child, with a rapturous embrace. "I couldn't believe—"

"May I come in too, Effie?" said another voice at the open door.

The color rushed to Effie's cheeks. She looked somewhat doubtfully at Grace, then, seeing that she still smiled, she answered, with a shade of embarrassment in her tone: —

"Why, yes, Mr. Rolfe, if — if Miss Forrester is willing."

"In that case, there is no doubt at all about it," he replied, and, entering, stood by Grace's side, regarding Effie's puzzled expression with a merry twinkle in his fun-loving eyes. "On the contrary, she has just assured me that, like the immortal Barkis, she is perpetually 'willin'' !"

"Why —" Effie began, looking from one to the other with a sort of bewilderment. "Then it is not true that you have —"

"Quarrelled?" said Rolfe, uttering the unspoken word that trembled on Effie's lips. "Not in the very least!"

"Not exactly *quarrelled* — I knew it was not the sort of quarrel one talks about — at least —"

Rolfe burst out laughing.

"Is that your notion of lovers' quarrels?" he cried gayly, "for I think that must be your meaning. No, no, my dear, nothing so small as that: believe me, we never did, and never shall, quarrel. But we both wished for a happiness that we scarcely dared hope for, and now it has come to us. Don't we look like two very happy people, Effie?"

"I am so very glad!" Effie exclaimed, sinking back on her pillows with a sigh of relief. "How could Marjorie have made such a mistake?"

But the strangest part of the affair to Effie's mind was that Marjorie could never be brought to own this mistake.

"Why, I have known about that all summer," she said, in reply to Effie's eager announcement of the engagement. "It was the first thing I *did* know about Mr. Rolfe. You quite misunderstood me, Effie."

"I suppose I must have — how very stupid of me!" said Effie, meekly.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

(*Marjorie to her mother.*)

"DEAR MOTHER: We do so hope you will come to the wedding, for Miss Grace insists that we shall all stay and be her bridesmaids, and that, 'far from our being in the way, she will have the greatest help from us in getting ready.' So I shall be a bridesmaid twice in one summer.

"'Three times a bridesmaid, never a bride,' Mr. Rolfe says. 'At the present rate, Miss Marjorie, you will be four times hopeless by the time you are eighteen!'

"He is so bright and funny — just like a boy, — and he has made us all promise that by and by, when the wedding journey is over, and they are settled at Woodlands, we will make them a visit. What fun we shall have!

"I never saw two people so happy as

Miss Grace and Mr. Rolfe. She is very quiet and calm, as she always is, but he is so brimming over with spirits that he makes us all laugh. His mother and sister are at Woodlands too, and I am very sure that Rosamond was mistaken in thinking they were not pleased with the engagement. They are very different from Mr. Rolfe. Miss Ellen is pretty and delicate, — what Cliff calls *finikin*, — and her mother is handsome and proud looking, but they are both as affectionate to Miss Grace as even Mr. Rolfe could wish.

"Dear mother, there is something I want to say to you before I see you, for I think it will be easier to say it on paper. We girls had a talk in our little bedrooms the other night. The others all said they were glad they had come here this summer, because Miss Forrester had helped them all so much, and each in a different way. Kate had got over having blue fits about her pictures, and determined just to work her way patiently up to being an artist, — 'besides learning to keep her temper, and darn her stockings,' she added.

"Effie had found out that she could cook, if she had no other accomplishment, and I am sure we can all tell her mother that she is no longer a spoiled child, as they used to call her at home. How bright and sweet-tempered she has been with her broken ankle, dear little Effie!

"Rachel has found out that 'it would not be so very hard, after all, to screw her courage up to the sticking-point when the time for it should come.' She was thinking of the time when she should teach, of course, but we all cried out together, 'No one can ever say again that you have no courage since that bull-fight, Ray!' 'Don't speak of that!' she said with a shudder, 'I didn't mean that!' But we did.

"And then it was my turn. 'I'm sure I'm glad I came to Havensholme, too, girls,' said I, 'but why I can't tell you. I don't think the place has shown me up in a favorable light at all. You must have a much poorer opinion of me than before we came — I'm sure I have of myself.'

"Of course they all exclaimed that it

wasn't so at all, but it is the truth, mother. I seem to have failed in all I've tried to do here, and I don't think I shall ever do things in quite the same way again. Do you know what I mean? I used to think that what I undertook would succeed just because *I* was to do it, and that the other girls would do as I said, because my way was really the best. Miss Grace and Mr. Richards have always seemed to feel differently about me from other people, and now I see how it has looked to them.

"We called Kate flighty and scatter-brained, but how she has persevered all summer in her painting, and I have been determined only about one thing — having my own way. Effie called herself selfish, but I have been that, not she. And Rachel is far braver than I could ever have been.

"I am ashamed to have failed, of course, but I do not feel angry at being ashamed, as I used to be. I am very, very glad that I came, which is odd, because I have learned nothing pleasant about myself as all the others have."

(*Mrs. Hammond to Marjorie.*)

"MY DEAREST MARJORIE: If you have learned all that your letter implies, you have certainly learned far more than all the other girls — just what you needed to learn, in fact. You have found out that self-confidence is not always self-reliance, and that many humiliations are not too dear a price to pay for gaining humility. Be happy with all your heart, dear child, for you have made me so. It will be a very joyous wedding to us all, for of course I shall come!"